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JAPAN vs THE WORLD BANK

Eric Hobsbawm

The Cult of Identity Politics

Mike Davis

Cosmic Catastrophes

Robert Wade

East Asia and the Neo-Liberal World

Anonymous

A Detective Story

John Bowring

How Gorbachev Misread

Nobias Abse

The Left's Victory in Italy

Roy Edgley

Anarchy in Academia

**Mary Mellor / Ariel Salleh / Cecile Jackson
debate Ecofeminism**

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The World Bank has been highly effective in diffusing—often, indeed, imposing—the doctrines of neo-liberal economics throughout the globe. Since Japanese economic performance cannot be understood in neo-liberal terms, it is not surprising that the Japanese government has been unhappy about the Bank's refusal to consider other economic models. In this issue, Robert Wade traces the fate of a Japanese attempt to encourage the World Bank to study the lessons of East Asian economic development. Japan undertook to finance a study, *The East Asian Miracle*, and a research team was assembled. But its conclusions could not be presented to a wider public until they had been minutely vetted and revised by custodians of the reigning orthodoxy. In this revealing and significant episode, skilfully reconstructed through interviews with key participants, we witness a classic instance of reality being tailored to fit dogma and vested interests. Robert Wade is the author of *Governing the Market*, an influential account of development strategies in East Asia.

Eric Hobsbawm argues that although the Left has and will form alliances with particular identities, it must remain essentially universalist in its aspirations. He points out that identity politics too often isolates and fetishizes only one dimension of the inescapable complexity of every human being. The resulting fragmentation cannot be subsequently repaired by adding up minorities, even if numerically they constitute majorities, since the foundation of collective action will have been lost. Drawing on Todd Gitlin's recent book, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, he urges that the Left has to speak for the people as a whole, and to devise shared solutions to the social crisis. The debility of identity politics is matched in Britain, Hobsbawm argues, by the reluctance of New Labour to rekindle commitment to common purposes and public agency.

Identity politics, in the guise of a survey of attitudes to masculinity among construction workers, is the starting point for a short detective story, 'Paul T— Investigates', which develops into a damning account of the treatment and illegal terms of employment among these workers. They are subject to overt intimidation, instant dismissal, and are frequently cheated out of their wages or the tax paid on them. Indeed, the situation is so serious that the author has asked that this piece be published anonymously to protect both his own further work in the area, and the identity of his informants.

The conditions highlighted in this short story, are only towards the extreme end of what André Gorz would argue is a more general alienation at work founded on the inescapable condition of employment in a complex economic system. Finn Bowring offers a reassessment of Gorz's work, defending him against his critics who have simplified and distorted his ideas about the world of work and the freedom conferred by increased time spent outside its confines.

In NLR 210 we carried a critique of ecofeminism by Cecile Jackson which argued that there was a danger of the movement denying women the benefits of development and even rejecting rationality itself. This was followed in NLR 216 with Caroline New's plea that the forces which make up men and women's partial and damaged identities should be seen as part of the same process. In this issue, we publish two replies to Jackson's article by Mary Mellor and Ariel Salleh. Mellor finds some common ground with Jackson but argues that ecofeminism can be reconciled with a materialist analysis of the need to reduce consumption. In a striking defence of ecofeminism, Salleh reminds us of what is at stake in arguments about women, men and the environment: the current global system condemns a billion people to starvation and wantonly destroys environments and species. Jackson replies to her critics, arguing that in combating these undoubted evils, we need to guard against rhetorical simplification and excessive hostility to scientific reason.

Moving beyond ideas of global interdependence to the interplanetary level, Mike Davis writes a fascinating account of the revolution in the Earth sciences. Reviewing the ideas of Herbert Shaw and others, Davis shows how scientific hypotheses about the Earth's ecology and its ability to sustain life may be linked to its relationship with a multitude of Near Earth Objects which every so often slam into its surface, transferring vast quantities of energy and life-building materials. When large objects fall to Earth, they are probably responsible for large-scale extinctions, and some may have even affected historical events.

Tobias Abse analyses the general election in Italy which returned the nation's first left-wing government this century. While the Left did not greatly increase its share of the vote, this victory nevertheless presents them with a great opportunity to reform the state and address the ills of Italian society.

Finally Roy Edgley writes a fine account of the life and work of Paul Feyerabend, responding to and filling in some of the omissions in Feyerabend's autobiography, *Killing Time*.

Japan, the World Bank, and the Art of Paradigm Maintenance: *The East Asian Miracle* in Political Perspective

To what extent is the World Bank an actor, an 'autonomous variable' in the international system?¹ Or to what extent are its objectives and approaches the mere manifestations of competition and compromise among its member states? Several writers have argued that the Bank has a relatively large amount of autonomy—from the state interests of its overseers, and that its staff have some autonomy from the senior management. They have traced this autonomy to variables such as 'lack of clarity of the priorities of organizational objectives', 'the difficulty and complexity of accomplishing the organization's mandate', 'bureaucratized structure' and 'professionalism of staff'.² But there is something strangely bloodless about this approach. It manages to discuss autonomy without conveying anything of the political and economic substance of the field of forces in which the Bank operates. By focusing only on morphological variables like 'professionalism' and the 'complexity of accomplishing the organization's mandate', it misses other variables like 'correspondence of organizational actions with the interests of the US state'. If the Bank is propelled by its

budgetary, staffing and incentive structures to act in line with those interests, the US state need not intervene in ways that would provide evidence of 'lack of autonomy'; yet the Bank's autonomy is clearly questionable.

This paper describes an episode in Japan's attempts over the 1980s and 1990s to assert itself on the world stage, to move beyond the constraints of dependency in a US-centred world economic system. The episode involves a Japanese challenge to the World Bank and its core ideas about the role of the state in the strategy for economic development. Over the 1980s Japan poured aid and investment into East and Southeast Asia, using its strong domestic capacity to strengthen its external reach. In doing so, Japan endorsed a market-guiding role for the state in recipient countries, and justified this role by pointing to its success in the development of Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. The World Bank found Japan's prescriptions inconsistent with its own programmatic ideas about the role of the state, which emphasized the need for thoroughgoing liberalization and privatization. Since the Bank's ideas are themselves derived from largely American interests in and ideas about free markets, Japan's challenge to the Bank was also a challenge to the US state—the Bank being an important instrument by which the US state seeks to project a powerful external reach, while having a much weaker domestic capacity than Japan's.

In the early 1980s, when the Bank started to champion liberalization and the private sector, the Bank and the Japanese government proceeded along independent paths. But growing tension reached a head in the late 1980s when the Bank criticized Japanese aid programmes, for undermining the aims of the Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In response, the Japanese government set out to change the Bank's core ideas about the role of the state in development strategy. It did so by inducing the Bank to pay more attention to East Asian development experience, so perhaps the Bank would change its mind, see more validity in the Japanese principles, and enhance Japan's role as a leader in development thinking. Japan's influence inside and outside the Bank would then grow. Specifically, the Japanese government persuaded the Bank to make a special study of East and Southeast Asia, focusing on why this region has become rich and what other countries should learn from the experience. The study was published in September 1993 as *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy*.

In this paper we examine, first, the build-up of tension between Japan and the Bank; second, the process by which the study was written inside the

¹ In addition to the cited sources, this paper is based on interviews with officials in Tokyo and Washington, DC, who prefer anonymity, and on my own experience as a World Bank economist in 1984–88. I thank Ngaire Woods, Linda Weiss, Ronald Dore, Devesh Kapur, Chalmers Johnson, Thomas Biersteker, Manfred Bienefeld, Wendy Law-Yone and Toru Yanagihara for comments. The paper can be read as a companion to my 'Selective Industrial Policies in East Asia: Is *The East Asian Miracle* Right?', in Albert Fishlow et al., eds, *Miracle or Design? Lessons from the East Asian Experience*, Washington, DC, 1994. The theoretical ideas behind the critique are set out in my *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization*, Princeton 1990.

² Stephen Kniesner, 'Regimes and the Limits of Realism: Regimes as Autonomous Variables', *International Organization*, no. 36, Spring 1982; William Ascher, 'New Development Approaches and the Adaptability of International Agencies: The Case of the World Bank', *International Organization*, no. 37, Summer 1983.

Bank; and third, the resulting text. We shall ask whether Japan's attempt to get the Bank to change its mind was successful. We shall see how the final document reflects an attempt at compromise between the well-established World Bank view and the newly-powerful Japanese view. The result is heavily weighted towards the Bank's established position, and legitimizes the Bank's continuing advice to low-income countries to follow the 'market-friendly' policies apparently vindicated by East Asia's success. But the document also contains enough pro-industrial policy statements to allow the Japanese to claim a measure of success. Taken together with other Bank studies prompted by Japan at the same time, it provides a number of 'attractor points' for research and prescriptions more in line with Japanese views. Although the Bank emerges with its traditional paradigm largely unscathed, this particular episode may even be looked back on as an early landmark in the intellectual ascendancy, in East and Southeast Asia if not in the West, of Japanese views about the role of the state. Finally, we shall come back to the issue raised in the first paragraph—the autonomy of the World Bank, and the extent to which it can be regarded as an 'actor' with objectives and approaches that are not simply the vector of the interests of its member states.

I. The World Bank's Position in the Development Debate

The World Bank enjoys a unique position as a generator of ideas about economic development. Around the world, debates on development issues tend to be framed in terms of 'pro or anti' World Bank positions. The Bank's ability to frame the debate rests on, 1) its ability to influence the terms on which low-income countries gain access to international capital markets, 2) a research and policy-design budget far larger than that of any other development organization, and 3) its ability to attract global media coverage of its major reports.

In the early 1980s the Bank swung into line with a US-led consensus about the needs of the world economy and appropriate economic policies for developing countries. Reflecting the demise of Keynesianism and the ascendancy of supply-side economics in the US and some parts of Europe, the consensus—the 'Washington consensus', as it has been called—was based on the twin ideas of the state as the provider of a regulatory framework for private-sector exchanges (but not as a *director* of those exchanges), and of the world economy as open to movements of goods, services, and capital, if not labour. The Bank's new Structural Adjustment Loans applied conditions conforming to these ideas, such that borrowers had to shrink the state and open the economy to international transactions. Its annual *World Development Reports* have provided the conceptual framework and evidence to justify these conditions. In particular, the *World Development Report 1987*, entitled *Trade and Industrialization*, articulated a strong 'free-market' or neo-liberal argument about the appropriate development approach.³

³ Note that 'trade' comes before 'industrialization' in the title. Anglo-American economists see trade and free-trade policy as the motor of industrialization, Japanese economists see trade and managed-trade policy as a subordinate part of industrialization and industrial strategy. See further Robert Wade, 'Managing Trade: Taiwan and South Korea as a Challenge to Economics and Political Science', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 25, no. 2 (1993), pp. 147–68.

The central problem of developing countries, in the Bank's view, is the weakness of their 'enabling environment' for private-sector growth. The enabling environment consists of infrastructure, a well-educated work force, macroeconomic stability, free trade, and a regulatory framework favouring private-sector investment and competition. Policies to secure such an environment are collectively called 'market-friendly'. The 'market-friendly' approach is not the same as laissez faire, the Bank is at pains to say, for there are areas where the market fails, in infrastructure and education, and where the government should step in with public spending.⁴ On the other hand, the approach warns against intervention beyond these limits, especially against sectoral industrial policies designed to promote growth in some industries more than others. Market-friendly policies—neither complete laissez faire nor interventionism—are optimal for growth and income distribution, says the Bank. This set of ideas is broadly consistent with US demands that its trading partners—Japan in particular—change their domestic institutions in order to create a 'level playing field' for free and fair trade.

In the late 1980s the Bank paid particular attention to financial sector reform. A Bank Task Force on Financial Sector Operations met to formulate policy on financial system reform, later to be put in the form of a mandatory Operational Directive. The Task Force championed a policy of far-reaching financial deregulation for developing countries, urging removal of all interest rate controls and all directed credit programmes. *The World Development Report 1989*, entitled *Financial Systems and Development* took a somewhat less extreme view. Written by a team that worked at the same time as the Task Force on Financial Sector Operations, it emphasized that private financial markets do make mistakes, particularly because of information problems and externalities—although these mistakes last for a *shorter time* than those of public financial agents. Where supervision and monitoring is effective, directed credit can work. Governments should, however, deregulate, but gradually. In August 1989, one month after the *World Development Report 1989* was published, the Bank issued the Report of the Task Force on Financial Sector Operations—known as the Levy Report, after its chief author, Fred Levy. As noted, it took a strong view against government intervention in financial markets. The later Bank policy directive on financial sector operations took this report, not the *World Development Report 1989*, as its foundation.

II. The Japanese Challenge

Throughout the 1980s the Japanese state has hugely strengthened its external reach through aid programmes and foreign investment. By the early 1980s it was already the principal co-financier of World Bank loans, the number two shareholder in IDA—the Bank's soft loan facility—and the biggest source of bilateral aid for Asia. In 1984 it became the second biggest shareholder in the World Bank (IBRD) after the US. By 1989 it had the biggest bilateral aid programme in the world. In 1990 it became the second biggest shareholder in the

⁴ See especially World Bank, *World Development Report 1991. The Challenge of Development*, Washington DC 1991.

International Finance Corporation—the Bank's affiliate for private-sector lending. In 1992 it became the second biggest shareholder—equal to Germany—in the International Monetary Fund. By the early 1990s Japan passed the US to become the world's biggest manufacturing economy; it accounted for half of the developed world's total net savings—US savings accounted for 5 per cent; and it became the world's biggest source of foreign investment. For all these reasons, Japan has come to matter for international financial institutions as never before—and also for the US state, whose deficits it has been financing.

The Japanese government has encouraged its recipient governments—the US aside—to think more strategically and in more interventionist terms than can be accommodated by World Bank ideas. In particular, it has sanctioned attempts by low-income states to go beyond the conventional neoclassical tasks of providing a property-rights framework and moderating market failures due to public goods, externalities and monopolies. It has encouraged aid recipients to articulate national objectives and policy choices, to catalyze market agents, and to assist some industries more than others. The Japanese government claims that the potential benefits of the state's directional thrust are illustrated by the actual benefits from the sectoral industrial policies of pre- and post-war Japan, and more recently, of Taiwan and South Korea. A regulated, 'non-liberalized' financial system capable of delivering concessional credit to priority uses, according to the Japanese, was a vital part of the organizational infrastructure of these policies.

In line with this thinking, in 1987 the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) published *The New Asian Industries Development Plan*, setting out a regional strategy of industrialization for Southeast Asian countries.⁵ Responding to the appreciation of the Japanese yen in the mid-1980s and the resulting need to transfer more Japanese production offshore, the plan outlined the ways that Japanese firms making location decisions consistent with the plan would benefit from various kinds of aid for infrastructure, finance, market access, and so on. Officials were explicit that 'Japan will increasingly use its aid... as seed money to attract Japanese manufacturers or other industrial concerns with an attractive investment environment'.⁶

The Dispute over Directed Credit

'Directed' credit—meaning subsidized and targeted or earmarked credit

⁵ The plan has not been translated into English but for a brief description in English, see Japan Economic Institute, report No. 22A, 18 June 1993, p. 9. The empirical and analytic underpinnings of the plan were put in place by studies of natural resources, trade and industrialization in Southeast Asian economies, over the 1970s and 1980s, by MITI economists and Japanese academics. The plan and its history illustrate the long-term nature of Japanese planning, and the coordination between government and firms. The contrast with the unstrategic nature of British and American aid and FDI policies is pronounced. One sees the results of the plan in the simultaneous spurt of Japanese FDI and aid to Thailand in 1988. Much of the aid was for the construction of industrial estates reserved for Japanese companies. The companies were exiting from Japan to escape quota restrictions on Japanese imports to OECD countries and environmental standards for industrial production, and to tap cheap Thai labour.

⁶ Taduo Chino, then vice-minister, Ministry of Finance, in 1991, cited in Edward Lincoln, *Japan's New Global Role*, Washington DC 1993, p. 124.

—was to be a key instrument of this strategy. In the late 1980s Japan's Ministry of Finance (MOF) established the ASEAN-Japan Development Fund, which offered directed credit to support private-sector development. The fund was administered by OECF, Japan's largest aid agency. Unhappy at these developments, Bank officials expressed their reservations to Japanese officials informally—to no effect.

In June 1989, a new Executive Director for Japan, Masaki Shiratori, arrived at the World Bank. As a senior MOF official, he had helped steer Japan's relations with international financial organizations for many years. Between 1981 and 1984, he played a central role in the strategy to raise Japan's shareholding in the IBRD from number five to number two.⁷ More persuasive in English than his predecessors, he was concerned to shift Japan's role from cheque-writer to leader—'no taxation without representation', some Japanese comment wryly—and to make the Bank drop its blanket opposition to directed credit policies.

By this time, both the World Bank and the Japanese government had well-articulated development strategies in place, the Bank emphasizing free markets, including nearly free financial markets, the Japanese government emphasizing guided markets, including guided financial markets. Japan was by then the second ranking shareholder in the World Bank after the US. And it had a new, articulate and forceful Executive Director, determined to make the Bank pay more attention to the East Asian experience and to rethink directed credit policies.

In September 1989 the dispute between the Bank and Japan's OECF over credit policies became explicit. Citing the case of the Philippines, a senior vice-president of the Bank wrote to the president of OECF—in charge of the ASEAN-Japan Development Fund—asking him to reconsider the policy of subsidized targeted loans: passing these funds to the banks and final beneficiaries at below market interest rates 'could have an adverse impact on development of the financial sector' and hence '*would create unnecessary distortions and set back the financial sector reforms*' which had been supported by the IMF's Extended Fund Facility and the Bank's Financial Sector Adjustment Loan.⁸ The dispute highlighted the underlying differences of

⁷ Masaki Shiratori was born in 1936, graduated from Tokyo University Law Faculty (1956–60), joined the Ministry of Finance in 1960, studied economics at Columbia University (1964–66), and was director of Coordination Division, International Finance Bureau (1984–85); after two more moves (1985–88), he became Senior Deputy Director-General of International Finance Bureau, then Executive Director for Japan, World Bank (1989–92), after which vice-president of the OECF (1992–). As chief of the International Financial Institutions division of the International Finance Bureau in 1981–84, in addition to raising Japan's rank in the IBRD, his second main goal was to get China accepted as a member of the Asian Development Bank, also successfully accomplished.

⁸ Emphasis added. The letter was signed by senior operational vice-president Moeen Qureshi. The Bank's interpretation is as follows: the story began in 1986 when the Bank agreed to help the government of the Philippines restructure two major public-sector banks—including the Development Bank of the Philippines. The banks were both bankrupt, partly because they had become patronage pots—with directed credit as the primary means of patronage. Their restructuring involved eliminating directed credit. Then along came the Japan-ASEAN Fund offering directed credit with a substantial subsidy element for narrowly earmarked purposes—the same instrument the banks had been using to dispense patronage. This was very difficult for the Bank to swallow. 'I remember many heated meetings in Tokyo and here in Washington', said a Bank official closely involved.

view, the Japanese arguing that financial policies should be designed to advance a wider industrial strategy, the Bank insisting that credit should always and everywhere be at 'market' or non-subsidized rates.⁹

Japan's Executive Director made strong protests to the Bank's senior management and to the Board of Executive Directors from member governments. Many Executive Directors from developing countries agreed with the Japanese position, but to no avail; Bank management refused to back down. Japan's Ministry of Finance and its OECF began to fight back. A key figure was Isao Kubota, a senior MOF official then on loan to OECF as managing director of the pivotal Coordination Department.¹⁰ He did two things. First, he established a team to write a paper setting out the broad principles of the Japanese government's understanding of structural adjustment. Second, he had discussions with Shiratori about how to get the Bank to pay more attention to the Japanese and wider East Asian development experience. This was the genesis of the *Miracle* study.

Meanwhile tensions were growing between Japan and the US as well. From May 1989 through to 1992, the two states were negotiating over market access—the Structural Impediments Initiative. The US tried to make the Japanese undertake domestic reforms of such features as the retail distribution system and the cross-ownership of firms, so making it more like the 'free market' or American system. The Japanese mostly resisted and in turn urged reform of US institutions. An American business executive in Tokyo later said about the wider relationship between Japan, on the one hand, and the US and Europe, on the other: 'The tired old technique of US and European leaders is to beat the Japanese with a piece of two by four. Not surprisingly, they resent it. They may be less cocky now that the economy is in recession, but there is a deep and growing and potentially damaging distrust of the West in the Tokyo corridors of power'.¹¹ Also during this period, Tokyo was flirting with membership in the Malaysian-sponsored East Asian Economic Caucus, from which the United States was excluded, while remaining cool to the American-endorsed Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.¹² This underlined Japan's new willingness to pursue a course apart from, and even opposed to, that of the US.

⁹ On the contrast between the Japanese and American approaches to these issues, see Hidenobu Okuda, 'Japanese Two Step Loans: The Japanese Approach to Development Finance', *Hitsushashi Journal of Economics*, no. 34, 1993, pp. 67–85. See also Isao Kubota, 'The East Asian Miracle—Major Arguments on Recent Economic Development Policy', *Finances* (MOF's monthly journal), December 1993 (in Japanese).

¹⁰ Kubota graduated from Tokyo University Law Faculty in 1966, joining MOF immediately. He undertook a BPhil in Economics, Oxford University, 1967–69. In 1985 he became director of the International Organization division of the International Finance Bureau of MOF. Seven years and four postings later, he became Senior Deputy Director General of the International Finance Bureau, the same job Shiratori had had before going as Executive Director to the World Bank.

¹¹ Quoted in Kevin Rafferty, 'Sun Sets Upon Japanese Miracle', *The Guardian*, 15 January 1994, p. 10. On the *see* Kozo Yamamura, ed., *Japan's Economic Structure: Should it Change?*, Society for Japanese Studies, 1990.

¹² See Chalmers Johnson, 'History Restarted: Japanese-American Relations at the End of the Century', in R. Higgott, R. Leaver, and J. Ravenhill, eds, *Pacific Economic Relations in the 1990s: Conflict or Cooperation?*, Boulder, CO 1993, pp. 39–61. And see his 'Wake up America!', *Critical Intelligence*, vol. 2, no. 8 (1994), for pungent views on a whole range of issues to do with Japan, Southeast Asia, and the US.

Back at the Bank, Lawrence Summers, a Harvard economist, joined as chief economist and vice-president in January 1991. Not noted for tact, he openly held the view that Japanese economists are 'second rate'. From January to June 1991, drafts of the Bank's *World Development Report 1991: The Challenge of Development*, underwent discussion within the Bank and the Board. Written under the leadership of a Chicago-trained economist, the report restated a largely free-market view of appropriate public policy for development, under the label 'market-friendly'. The term was coined by Summers who exerted influence at this late stage of the report to moderate the extreme free-market position of the earlier drafts, but in Japanese eyes it still remained extreme.

Blueprint for Development

Then in October 1991 the OECF—whose main parent ministry is the Ministry of Finance—issued the paper initiated by Kubota, entitled 'Issues Related to the World Bank's Approach to a Structural Adjustment: Proposal from a Major Partner'.¹³ Its main points are as follows:

- 1) For a developing country to attain sustainable growth, the government must adopt 'measures aiming "directly" at promoting investment'.
- 2) These measures should be part of an explicit industrial strategy to promote the leading industries of the future.
- 3) Directed and subsidized credit has a key role in promoting these industries because of extensive failures in developing countries' financial markets.
- 4) Decisions about ownership arrangements, including privatization, should relate to actual economic, political and social conditions in the country concerned, not to the universal desirability of privatizing public enterprises. For example, there may be legitimate national sentiments about the desirability of foreign ownership.
- 5) 'Japanese fiscal and monetary policies in the post-war era may be worthy of consideration. These were centred on preferential tax treatment and development finance institutions' lendings'.¹⁴

¹³ This is the OECF's *first* Occasional Paper, thirty years after its foundation in 1961.

¹⁴ OECF, 'Issues Related to the World Bank's Approach to a Structural Adjustment: Proposal from a Major Partner', pp. 5–6. Isao Kubota was the chief promoter of the paper, supported by the president of the OECF, Mr Nishigaki. They aimed to have the paper circulated widely at the Annual Meeting of the World Bank and the IMF in October 1991. Preparation was entrusted to Yasutami Shimamura, director of the Economic Analysis Department of OECF. In addition to drawing on the ideas of OECF people (notably Kubota and Kazumi Goto, a division chief in the Coordination Department), Shimamura also assembled a team of outside academic economists. They included professors Yanagihara (Hosei), Horiuchi (Tokyo), Horiuchi (JDB), Okuda (Hitotsubashi), Urata (Waseda). This group met once a month for five months. They 'found it very difficult to make a consensus' on the content of the Japanese critique, said a participant. Some of them saw little to criticize in the neoclassical paradigm, and others who were sceptical of it were hesitant to openly criticize the World Bank at this time. Eventually, with time before the Annual Meeting getting short, Shimamura wrote a draft, presented it to the research team, modified it to take account of reactions, and then presented it to the Board of OECF, even though some members of the research team were not happy with the result. The OECF Board approved release of the paper in time for it to be circulated at the Annual Meeting. The haste—and the overriding of the rule of consensus—came from the knowledge that if they missed the October deadline they would have to wait a year until the next Annual Meeting. The paper is very short (fourteen generously spaced pages in the English typescript) and the quality of the argumentation leaves much to be desired. It is published (in Japanese) in *OECF Research Quarterly*, no. 73, 1991.

Also in October 1991, at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the World Bank and the IMF, Yasushi Mieno, head of the Bank of Japan, the central bank,¹⁵ said, 'Experience in Asia has shown that although development strategies require a healthy respect for market mechanisms, the role of the government cannot be forgotten. I would like to see the World Bank and the IMF take the lead in a wide-ranging study that would define the theoretical underpinnings of this approach and clarify the areas in which it can be successfully applied to other parts of the globe.'¹⁶ Mieno's statement was prepared by the International Finance Bureau of the MOF. Isao Kubota—by now transferred back from OECF to a senior position in this same bureau, and drafter of Mieno's statement—later made the point more vividly to reporters: 'It's really incredible. They think their economic framework is perfect. I think they're wrong.'¹⁷

¹⁴ (cont.)

Shimamura has a bachelor's degree in economics from Keio University (1960–63), and an MBA from Colombia University (1968–70). He is currently professor of economics at Seitama University. His father is Osamu Shimamura, the celebrated author of the Income Doubling Plan (and PhD in economics from Tohoku University). Kubota has elaborated his views in 'The Case for Two Step Loans', and 'Reflections on Recent Trends in Development Aid Policy', both read at a biannual meeting between the World Bank and the OECF/J-EXIM, in May and November 1991, respectively; and also in 'The Role of Domestic Saving and Macroeconomic Stability in the Development Process', Economic Society of Australia, *Economic Papers*, vol. 10, no. 2, (1991) pp. 34–42. Masaki Shiratoci's views are set out in 'Development Assistance to Developing Countries: Japanese Model More Relevant than Simple Marketism', *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 20 May 1992 (in Japanese). Kazumi Goto gives his opinion in 'Japan Loan Aid in Perspective. Alice's Adventures in OECF-Land', OECF, London Office, 3 December 1993. See also the views of Akiyoshi Horiuchi (professor of economics, Tokyo University) in, 'Comments on OECF Occasional Paper Number 1', *OECF Research Quarterly* 74, 1992 (in Japanese).

¹⁵ He was deputizing for the Finance Minister, who is the Governor of the Board for Japan.

¹⁶ World Bank, press release no. 16, 15 October 1991, cited in Chalmers Johnson, 'Comparative Capitalism: The Japanese Difference', *California Management Review*, Summer 1993, pp. 51–67.

¹⁷ Quoted in 'Japan Wants Strings on Aid: At Odds with us, Tokyo Urges Managed Economics', *International Herald Tribune*, 2 March 1992. Around this time, another event illustrated the divergence between the us and the Japanese position, and the Japanese willingness to challenge Bank management. In November 1991 the top management of the Bank and some key Western executive directors opposed publication of a study of World Bank support for industrialization in a number of industrializing countries (World Bank Support for Industrialization in Korea, India, and Indonesia, Washington, DC 1992). The study had been made by Sanjaya Lall, an Oxford economist, for the Operations Evaluation Department (OED) of the Bank. It concluded that the Bank had failed to draw lessons from successful government intervention in Asian economies for the benefit of its lending practices elsewhere. One of the main lessons was that 'Industrial success at the national level depends on the interplay of three sets of factors: incentives, capabilities, and institutions...Just one set of factors by itself cannot lead to industrial development...Each of the three determinants of industrialization may suffer from market failure. Industrial strategy should address all these interrelated issues.' (ibid., pp. iv, v) The Bank, it said, has unwarrantedly discounted the positive role of industrial strategy, relying too heavily on incentives while underplaying the building up of capabilities and institutions. And it 'has only partially fulfilled the function of correctly analyzing Korea's experience with industrialization.' (p. vii) The report urged the Bank 'to help governments design industrial policies', and to 'adopt a more differentiated, nuanced approach to recommending policy packages to individual governments' (pp. 54, 55). The top management called for the report not to be made available outside the Bank until its conclusions had been suitably revised, on the grounds that it gave 'too strong an endorsement of government intervention...Even if the causes of government failure could be identified and minimized, the report calls for the impossible: fine-tuning an array of trade and industrial interventions to deal with real or perceived market failures is generally not feasible.' The report, says the

By late 1991 tension between Japan and both the Bank and the US was running high. Articles based on interviews with Japanese officials began appearing in the American and Japanese press with titles like 'Japan-US Clash Looms on World Bank Strategy'. The anonymous Japanese officials called the Bank's approach 'simple minded', resting on 'outmoded Western concepts that fail to take account of the successful strategy pursued by Japan and some of its Asian neighbours in developing their economies'.¹⁸ Privately, those officials accused Bank economists of gross arrogance, of presuming to lecture them on why the Japanese government was doing the wrong things while at the same time asking for more Japanese money.

Another statement of Japanese principles came out in April 1992, in the form of MITI's blueprint for economic reconstruction and development in Russia. 'Western industrial countries', it said, 'can make many suggestions to help Russia with its economic reform. This paper... focuses on what Russia can learn from *Japan's* experience...' It described its approach as being in 'stark contrast' to that of the IMF, presented in a report on Russia earlier the same year. 'Market mechanisms cannot be almighty', it claimed, expressing doubts about whether 'macroeconomic approaches', such as those advocated by the IMF, were sufficient to meet the chief need of revitalizing production. Japan's post-war economic renaissance could be used to formulate appropriate policies in, for example, the design of emergency measures to halt the plunge in output, and of 'priority production programmes' to ensure the supply of essential industrial goods. 'The worst choice would be to diversify investment in an all-out manner, because... what is now most needed is focus on specific sectors of particular importance as a way to increase overall production.'¹⁹ In other words, Russia must as a matter of urgency have a *sector-specific* industrial policy.

III. Why the Japanese Challenge?

As the Japanese government greatly increased its capital contribution

¹⁷ (*cont.*)

Bank, offers an approach that 'is at variance with best practices as we know them, and would therefore be very counter-productive to the country dialogues'. It would open the way for governments 'to point out that the Bank's own evaluation department has concluded that the Bank's current approach is incorrect'. (This text is taken from a memorandum sent from a senior vice-president to the chairman of the Joint Audit Committee, who was also the American Executive Director, 11 November 1991. The Joint Audit Committee, made up of representatives from the Board of Directors of the Bank—none from management—is the body to which the Operations Evaluation department reports, which is why the senior vice-president was unable to squash the report himself). Several executive directors, mostly from borrowing countries but including, crucially, Japan's, pressed the Bank to publish the study as is. They prevailed and the study was published.

¹⁸ The title and quote come from an article by Rich Miller in the *Journal of Commerce*, 11 December 1991, p. 1a. See also 'Free Market Theory not Practical in Third World: Interview with Masaki Shiratori', *EUR*, 27 March 1992. And 'Japan Challenges World Bank Orthodoxy', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 March 1992, p. 49. 'Japan Presses World Bank on Lending: Nation Begins Asserting Independent Voice in Global Forum', *The Nikkei Weekly*, 12 March 1992, p. 3.

¹⁹ The plan was not formally a MITI document. It came out of the MITI Research Institute. See Fusae Ota, Hiroya Tanikawa, Taruke Onari, 'Russia's Economic Reform and Japan's Industrial Policy', MITI Research Institute, typescript, n.d. (April 1992), emphasis added. For a summary, see Anthony Rowley, 'To Russia with Pride: Japan Offers Economic Model', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 August 1992, pp. 59–60.

to the Bank, it wished, not surprisingly, to see its views more fully reflected in Bank thinking. But why present itself as a champion of 'anti-paradigmatic' views? As it becomes more powerful, why does it not endorse free trade and obscure the mercantilist elements in its own history?

There are at least four possible reasons. The first is ideological conviction. The senior officials in those parts of the government leading the challenge genuinely believe that interventionist policies can be more effective than the Bank's 'market-friendly' set of policies. They emphasize the role of interventionist policies in Japan's own development—the ways in which selective interventions can help Japanese aid be more effective. Being able to demonstrate aid effectiveness is especially important when official development assistance (ODA) has been largely exempt from the government's budget cuts. With many Japanese policy-makers disgruntled about the amount of aid, the Finance Ministry is under constant pressure to show it being well used. Indeed, said MOF officials, they have been criticized by other government agencies for being too focused upon aid effectiveness, for not paying enough attention to Japan's national interest. Their reply is that making best use of aid money helps to stabilize the world economy, which is also in Japan's national interest. Ideological conviction is especially intense on financial issues. The phrases, the 'money-making culture' and the 'thing-making culture', are in common use in Japan, representing a widespread sense—as in Islamic condemnations of usury—that making goods and providing services is intrinsically a more worthy activity than making money by financial dealings, and that the financial sector should be industry's servant.

The second reason for the challenge is organizational interest. The Bank's criticism of Japan's concessional and directed aid schemes in Southeast Asia were aimed at what MOF considered its greatest post-war achievement. Directed credit was its principal industrial policy instrument in the post-war renaissance of Japan; effective use of directed credit is the foundation of its claim to have played a major role in the 'miracle'. The claim is reflected in the OECF's mandate to provide directed and concessional credit as part of the Japanese aid strategy. No wonder MOF—and when we speak of 'Japan–World Bank' relations we mean MOF–World Bank relations, for MOF jealously guards its monopoly—resents hearing the Bank announce to the world that directed and concessional credit can never be effective, all the more so since the Bank's claim rests on near total ignorance of directed credit in North-east Asia.

The third reason is national material interest. Building a powerful market position across East and Southeast Asia is a top Japanese government objective. Interventionist policies can potentially help Japanese firms and the Japanese government consolidate profits and influence in the region—enabling the Malaysian government, say, to give special support to the Malaysian joint-venture partner of a Japanese firm, or to the Japanese firm directly through targeted loans and protection.²⁰ Getting the World Bank to admit the potential desirability of selective industrial

²⁰ The *Economist* gives its own gloss to this point. Talking about foreign car makers coming into Asian countries, it says, 'Once in, the foreigners have a nasty habit of becoming as protectionist as any local. Their aim is to persuade Asian governments not to open up their car markets or allow in new investors until their local operations have grown big enough to become competitive' (15 October 1994, p. 81).

promotion would help to advance this agenda. But why might the Japanese government, or a part of it, wish to *advertise* the fact that it was playing by different rules in its aid programme? The answer may lie in the fact that the Bank had already strongly criticized Japan for doing so. This put the burden on Japan to show that playing by different rules could yield development outcomes better than those of the Bank—or to get the Bank to rethink.

The fourth reason is nationalism, the desire to overcome a sense of being judged inferior by representatives of other states—or in this case, multilateral financial institutions. This sentiment is caught in the phrase often heard in and about Japan, 'economic superpower and political pygmy', or in Ichiro Ozawa's likening of Japan to a dinosaur with a huge body but a tiny brain.²¹ In response to the perception of being judged inferior, Japan adopted a state strategy of channelling economic activities so as to achieve independence from, leverage over, and respect in the eyes of other states, rather than to achieve consumer utility, private wealth, or freedom of society from government. As it has become during the 1980s a 'mature' economy with a very large role in the international economy, it has also frequently been criticized for lacking the leadership on the world stage befitting its economic might. There is a growing urge among Japanese officials, politicians and the general public for Japan to set this right. But how?

Japan cannot constantly bow to foreign—that is, US—pressure. It needs to be seen asserting its own views on appropriate rules for the international economy. These cannot be free-trade rules, for the free-trade ideology is already led by the US. It can differentiate its principles from those of the US by basing them on its own experience of economic nationalism, presenting them as general principles confirmed by other East Asian experience and as sources of meta-policies for developing countries today. On these grounds, it can present itself as the champion of developing countries in the governing councils of the international financial institutions. At the same time, its principles also stay away from the dangerous idea of Japanese uniqueness. No country has come to exercise a leadership role in the world system without claiming to represent a universalistic ideology. In short, the Japanese challenge to the World Bank can be seen as part of a wider attempt by the Japanese elite to develop an ideology that goes beyond Japanese uniqueness and yet remains distinct from free trade and orthodox liberalism.²²

IV. The Bank's Resistance

Bank managers saw the Japanese ideas about the role of the state—

²¹ Ichiro Ozawa, *Nihon Kaizo Keikaku*, p 17, cited in Chalmers Johnson, 'The Foundations of Japan's Wealth and Power and Why they Baffle the United States', typescript, UCSD 1993.

²² What of the relative importance of the four reasons? One might proceed by comparing what the Japanese want for the World Bank and what they do in the Asian Development Bank. From the beginning they have had much more influence in the ADB than in the World Bank—from which one can infer that the pattern of ADB lending gives a close reflection of their principles. Relations between the Japanese President and the US Executive Director have been strained over the past several years, in connection with lending priorities and the need to raise the ADB's capital stock.

the emphasis on directed credit and the more general argument linking the appropriate role of the state to the amount of state 'capacity'²³—as a serious threat. Why? First, because concessional credit from the Japanese aid budget makes World Bank credit less attractive. The Bank especially needs to find borrowers in East and Southeast Asia, where Japanese aid is concentrated, to raise the average quality of its loan portfolio. Second, the Japanese emphasis on directed credit as an instrument of the industrial policy of recipient governments runs flatly contrary to the Bank's emphasis on financial system deregulation, a central thrust of its macroeconomic reform formula through the 1980s. Third, if the Bank were to embrace the interventionist role of the state wanted by the Japanese government it would, in the eyes of its managers, risk its ability to borrow at the best rates on world money markets—and so face lower demand for its now more expensive funds. It would also risk its second most valuable asset after its government guarantees—its reputation as a country-rating agency, a kind of international Standard and Poors that signals to private investors where they should put their money.²⁴ Why would such dire consequences follow? Because the Bank's ability to borrow at the best rates and to act as a country-rating agency depends on its reputation among financial capitalists, which in turn depends on its manifest commitment to *their* version of 'sound' public policies. Their version is based on the premise that only one set of rules should apply to all participants in the international economy and that those rules should express a non-nationalistic role of the state.²⁵ If this premise constitutes an imperative from the Bank's point of view, it is because any change of mind could be very costly.

Fourth, if the Bank were to embrace the Japanese view, it would run against the strategic and diplomatic power of the US, which has used the Bank as an instrument of its own external infrastructural power to a greater degree than any other state. And the Bank would delegitimize itself in the eyes of American academic economics, with its belief in the overwhelming virtues of markets and its political agenda of deregulation—an agenda endorsed by those who do well out of free markets. The President of the Bank has always been an American; Americans are greatly over-represented at professional levels in the Bank relative to the US's shareholding; some two thirds of World Bank

²³ Max Weber, of course, would have agreed, and also Gunnar Myrdal.

²⁴ Standard and Poors is one of the two main US investment rating agencies.

²⁵ Thus, at least, is how Bank officials often state the matter. The truth is more complicated. The Bank's top-grade credit rating primarily depends upon its non-borrowing governments' guarantees and its first claimant status for borrowing governments—this status being enforced by knowledge that a non-repaying government will get no more aid from a World Bank-affiliated government. So the Bank's top-grade credit rating does not depend on financial markets' evaluation of the quality of its loan portfolio. Rather, the link between its credit rating and its reputation for 'sound' lending conditions comes via the legislatures of the non-borrowing governments. The decision to honour the guarantees would not, in practice, be automatic. The US Congress, in particular, would have to authorize the expenditure, and has a long history of delaying authorization of foreign appropriations. If it held a low opinion of the Bank, it might delay authorization of the guarantee expenditures for a long time. Whether it holds the Bank in disrepute depends on the Bank's reputation in the eyes of financial markets. Much of what the Bank says in its flagship publications is vetted with this in mind; see especially the two recent *World Development Reports* that have provided a broad overview of development experience and theory, those for 1987 and 1991.

economists are certified by US universities—and 80 per cent by North American or British universities.²⁶

Fifth, the Bank's constitution requires it to be 'apolitical', and the single meta-policy, sanctioned as it claims to be by a transcendent and apolitical 'economic rationality', helps the Bank preserve the claim of 'political impartiality'. One of the most important conceptual contributions of the Bretton Woods conference—which created the World Bank and the IMF—was the idea of equal treatment of all members of the new financial order. It was intended to avoid the politicization of the 1920s international rescue operations. There would be no 'favourites', but a community of states supporting each other at times of difficulty by means of a universalistic set of rules. To now admit the potential efficacy of sector-specific industrial policies would require the Bank to discriminate between countries in terms of such factors as government capacity and corruption, on the quite reasonable grounds that industrial policies are unlikely to be effective in states whose governments are thoroughly corrupt. But doing so would expose it to the charge of being 'political', and open it to pressure from *borrowers* saying, 'You urged/allowed country X to do A, why can't we?'²⁷

Sixth, commitment to the Bank's meta-policy allows the organization to act quickly and concertedly. The meta-policy is derived from neoclassical economics and receives the endorsement of most US- and UK-trained economists who took control of the Bank from top to bottom over the 1980s; technical specialists—engineers, agronomists, health specialists, and so forth—were removed from operational management positions or not replaced when they retired.²⁸ The common commitment to the neo-classical meta-policy by the Bank's management cadre helps senior management to overcome the 'agency' problem of subordinates exercising discretion in ways they do not like. It keeps the whole management spine in proper alignment. It also allows country departments to be efficient advice givers. Policies seen to be inconsistent with neoclassical normative theory are excluded from the start. Of course, the Bank's lending practices on the ground have often differed from what the recipe calls for. But the case-by-case modifications come from the need to adjust pragmatically to 'political realities', not from a belief that the *economics* of the meta-policy might be less than universal. (So China, with one of the most interventionist, price-distorting governments of all, was the Bank's

²⁶ This is based on the staff of the research complex (PRR) in 1991. Of the total 465 Higher Level Staff, 290 had graduate degrees from US universities, 74 from the UK, 10 from Canada, and none from Japan. I thank Devesh Kapur for this information.

²⁷ In fact, since the early 1990s, the Bank has begun to talk more overtly about politics, but warily and in the reassuringly technical language of governance—'accountability', 'transparency', 'predictability', and so on. Even this has generated unease and opposition within the Bank and the Board, on the grounds that it risks being inconsistent with the charter. The issue came to a head in a Board discussion about a research department study, three years in the making, entitled 'Bureaucrats in Business', in July 1995, when some Executive Directors argued strongly that the Bank should not be talking about these issues—the French Executive Director in particular, perhaps with governance in ex-French Sub-Saharan African countries in mind.

²⁸ Nick Stern, 'The Bank as an Intellectual Actor', paper for World Bank History project, London School of Economics, 1993. See also John Markoff and Veronica Montecinos, 'The Ubiquitous Rise of Economists', *Journal of Public Policy*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1993), pp. 37–68.

fastest growing borrower over the 1980s. The Bank and China need each other—China to get finance and intellectual help, the Bank to lend to a big absorber with little debt.) At the level of principles, the neoclassical and largely free-market meta-policy is insulated from particular modifications.

Seventh, the Bank sees the Japanese position as posing a threat not only to itself but to its borrowers. The Japanese position requires the low-income country state to play a *strategic* role in governing the integration with the world economy—maintaining the relative separation of the domestic and international spheres for policy making—not just the role of transmission belt from the ‘realities’ of the world economy to the national economy. Such a strategic role, says the Bank, generally *lowers* national welfare. Even if some evidence suggests that some governments some of the time have played this role effectively, 90 per cent of governments have been unable to. Notwithstanding this, the vested interests pushing governments to intervene in counter-productive ways are so powerful that governments will go on doing so unless hindered by some impartial and powerful agency—the World Bank and the IMF, for example. The Japanese views, says the Bank, give unwelcome legitimacy to such interventionist impulses.

Finally, even if such policies raise national welfare in a single case, they can do so only by ‘free riding’ on the restraint of others—promoting industries to compete in US markets while closing the domestic market to US exports, for example. So the Japanese principles cannot be practised by all at the same time, and in that sense pose a *systemic* threat.

These eight reasons radically over-determine the Bank’s reaction of alarm and denial to the pro-interventionist views of its second biggest shareholder. But the danger could be diffused and confrontation contained as long as the Bank did not have to deal explicitly with the causes of East Asia’s economic success; in dealing with other regions or with ‘development-in-general’, it could simply ignore Japanese ideas about development strategy. On the other hand, if it did have to examine in depth the causes of this success, a more or less explicit statement about the validity of apparently very different views would have to be made. Given Japan’s power, that resolution would have to make some concession to Japanese views, for otherwise the number two shareholder would lose too much face and become less cooperative. The Japanese MOF decided to force the issue.

V. Making the Miracle: Stage One

To recap: in 1989 the Bank made a strong criticism of the Japanese aid agency, OECF, for its credit policies in Southeast Asia. In response, senior MOF officials considered how to get the Bank to be more ‘pragmatic’ and heed the experience of Japan and other East Asian economies.

In 1991, soon after the arrival of Lewis Preston as the new president of the World Bank, the Japanese MOF pressed the Bank to make a

thorough study of East Asian development experience. The Bank's senior management was reluctant to permit the study, but agreed for two reasons. First, the Japanese would pay for it, the Bank having to bear only the time cost of its own staff.²⁹ Second, in return for the Bank's concession, the Japanese agreed to drop their opposition to the draft Operational Directive on Financial Sector Operations, which urged full-scale financial deregulation.³⁰ In January 1992 the study got under way, with a budget of \$1.2 million from the Japanese trust fund. It was to be written over eighteen months for publication at the time of the Annual Meeting in September 1993.³¹

The core study, giving the overall analysis and conclusions, was to be based in the Bank's research complex under Lawrence Summers and Nancy Birdsall (the director of the research department, an American). They appointed John Page (DPhil in economics from Oxford, undergraduate in economics at Stanford, another American) to head the study. Page put together a team of six people, all with PhDs in economics, all but one from American universities.³² None had adult experience of living and working in Asia.

There were also to be a number of case-studies of countries organized by the Bank's East Asia vice-presidency; some to be written by authors inside the Bank, others by outside consultants. The outsiders were offered \$10,000 per case-study, and required to submit drafts in six

²⁹ The money came from Japan's amply endowed Policy and Human Resource Development trust fund for the World Bank. Many rich country members of the Bank have trust funds which are controlled jointly by the member country and the Bank to cover jointly agreed operational expenses of the Bank. 20 per cent of the Bank's operational budget is now met from trust funds. The great advantage of this arrangement from the rich countries' view is that each government has a direct say in how 'its' money is used. If, at the same time, these countries squeeze the regular budget, they are able to gain pleasing *bilateral* influence over the Bank. In the late 1980s, the Bank had similarly got the governments which had been voicing concern about the impact of structural adjustment programmes on vulnerable groups—the 'soft' northern governments—to finance much of the Bank's work on the design of anti-poverty programmes.

³⁰ It emerged as Operational Directive 8.30, Financial Sector Operations, February 1992. It was largely the work of those who had earlier written the Levy Report. The Japanese were its main opponents in the Board.

³¹ The Bank's staff costs were about \$800,000 (\$150,000/year \times 1.5 years \times 3.5 persons). The Bank provided another \$200,000 for miscellaneous costs. This brought the total *Miracle* budget to \$2.2 million, about the same as for a *World Development Report*.

³² Other Bank staff included Ed Campos (Filipino, US PhD in the social sciences but de facto in economics, from Caltech, working on institutional issues), Marylou Uy (Filipina, US PhD in economics from UCLA, working on financial issues). Page, Campos and Uy worked full-time on the study, Birdsall worked half-time. The main consultants included Max Corden (Australian, trade economist, working on macroeconomics); Joseph Stiglitz (American, economic theorist, working on finance); Howard Pack (American, development economist, University of Pennsylvania, working on tests of the effectiveness of selective industrial policy); Richard Sabot (American, development economist, Williams College, working on human capital). Nancy Birdsall also worked with Sabot on human capital. A commentator on an earlier draft, who helped to manage the study, queried my presentation of the personnel: 'Why do you emphasize the fact of so many Americans? It seems you are implying that because we are Americans we had pre-determined conclusions. In fact, we were eager to find a story that would be new. Anyway, you are misleading because the team's composition was about average for World Bank economists.' It is true that the Bank employs very few East Asian economists—but a lot of US- or UK-certified South Asian economists. Experience of employing Japanese economists has been disappointing, perhaps because the Bank is unwilling to hire in groups.

months—so their research had to be largely off-the-shelf. In addition, several background papers on Japan were commissioned from Japanese scholars.

Although it got the country studies, the East Asia vice-presidency felt passed over. The vice-president for East Asia, Gautam Kaji, first heard of the study at a board meeting. Asked by an executive director for his views about the proposed study, he confessed not to know about it. Summers bypassed the East Asia vice-presidency, aware that its senior managers and economists held views towards the free market extreme of the Bank's range. The rivalry between the core team in the research complex and the East Asia vice-presidency was to shape the arguments of the study.

At the same time, a parallel and complementary project was initiated, again with Japanese funding, to examine the effect of directed credit in Japan. This was undertaken on behalf of the Bank by the Japan Development Bank, reviewing its own programmes. Its conclusions were to feed into the *Miracle* study.³³ A third Japanese-funded study about Japan, 'The Evolution, Character and Structure of the Japanese Civil Service, and its Role in Shaping the Interrelationships between the Government and the Private Sector', was undertaken by the Bank's educational arm, the Economic Development Institute (EDI), for use in World Bank teaching courses. Suddenly the Bank was paying a lot more research attention to Japan than ever before, thanks to Japanese initiative and Japanese money.³⁴

From early 1992 to early 1993, the first drafts of the *Miracle* chapters were written and discussed within the core group. John Page was given a free hand by senior managers, with no hint of the expected conclusions. Lawrence Summers urged him to think in new ways, to listen carefully to the Japanese arguments. 'We were eager to find a story that would be new, all the more so because the Bank's standard "market-friendly" story had already been told in *World Development Report 1991*', said Page later. Indeed, Summers' reaction to Page's proposed names for the team was: 'Too neoclassical, you will be seen as trying to force East Asian data into a neoclassical strait-jacket'. Page responded that for the report to have an impact in the Bank, it had to use the language of neoclassical economics: the team stayed as he proposed.

The team members accepted that East Asian governments implemented policies at substantial variance from the Bank's orthodoxy, but they found it difficult to unearth clear evidence about the causal impact of these non-orthodox policies on economic growth. Wrestling with this issue for many months, they eventually concluded: 'It is possible that some of these non-orthodox policies helped some of the time, but, with some exceptions, we can't show it'.

Also at this time, this version of the 'institutional basis' chapter was

³³ The JDB's data were also made available to two American economists for independent econometric assessment of the effectiveness of the credit policies.

³⁴ There was also a comparative study of tax systems in Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and India. The additional studies had a combined budget of \$1.8 million from the Japanese Trust Fund.

restructured. This version had taken as its main question, 'What features of East Asian institutions enabled these economies to avoid the costs that befall equally interventionist and authoritarian states elsewhere; or why did their many strategic interventions not lead to massive rent-seeking?' It presented government-business consultative councils, for example, as an institutional device that reduced the authoritarian character of East Asian political regimes by providing an institutionalized channel of feedback from the people directly affected by business policies. Birdsall and Page thought this might be interpreted as sanctioning authoritarianism and interventionism—as saying, 'If you have institutional features X, Y, and Z you can avoid the expected costs of authoritarianism and interventionism'. In the rewriting, this theme was much diluted. The chapter was brought into line with the report's larger argument that East Asian states are more successful because they are *less* interventionist, and the implication that some authoritarianisms are better than others was removed.

VI. Making the Miracle: Stage Two

Around March 1993 the second stage of the production process began with rounds of discussion at successively higher levels of the approval hierarchy. A full-time editor, Lawrence MacDonald, was hired from the *Asia Wall St. Journal*.³⁵ Over the next several months he and Page sent material back and forth, the editor revising the drafts in line with comments, Page commenting on the editor's revisions, the editor taking on board Page's comments and resubmitting to Page. The editor was the only person on the project with work experience in Asia. He attempted to inject some discussion of cultural propensities to save and educate, and of the role of the overseas Chinese. The team rejected these suggestions, the former for being too difficult to pin down with evidence, the second for being too liable to be taken as racist.

To discuss the drafts, many meetings were held with people from the East Asia vice-presidency which had something close to a veto over the study being approved for sending to the Board—and thence for public release. The East Asia staff attacked the work for excessive emphasis on government intervention. 'Where is the *evidence* for what you are saying?', they demanded. The East Asia vice-presidency was well versed in demolishing arguments about the efficacy of industrial policy, its chief economist having just co-authored a book reiterating a largely free-market interpretation of East Asian economic success;³⁶ its vice-president, still smarting from being excluded from the study's initiation, provided support for such challenges. Its representatives badgered the team about 'strategy'—as in the working subtitle, 'Strategies for Rapid Growth' and phrases like 'a strategic approach to growth'. Such phrases could be misconstrued to mean that East Asian growth was due primarily to 'strategic' interventions in industrial policy, or even to sanction the idea of an alternative East Asian type of capitalism. The East Asia

³⁵ MacDonald, also an American, worked intensively on the drafts and redrafts from March to September 1993

³⁶ Ramgopal Agarwala and Vinod Thomas, *Sustaining Rapid Growth in East Asia and the Pacific*, World Bank Publications, Washington DC 1993

representatives also argued, more generally, that the Bank had an interest in getting the market-friendly approach, as set out in the *World Development Report 1991*, accepted as the correct approach to economic policy in all developing countries, and it would look odd if the study of East Asia, of all regions, did not embrace it too. Not coincidentally, the *World Development Report 1991* was written by a team headed by the man who was then chief economist for East Asia.

The spectacle of the East Asia vice-presidency evacuating upon the draft convinced Page and Birdsall of the need to make concessions if the draft was to proceed up the approval hierarchy. What could they concede? First, they recognized that 'strategy' and 'strategic' implied—at least to the East Asia vice-presidency—a stronger argument about the efficacy of industrial policy than they wished to make, and were distracting attention from the substance of the argument about market failures. All references to strategy were therefore deleted, being replaced, where necessary, with the innocuous 'functional', as in 'a functional approach to growth'.³⁷ Second, they praised the market-friendly approach in several places. Lewis Preston's preface was made more explicit: 'The authors conclude that rapid growth in each economy was primarily due to the application of a set of common, market-friendly economic policies'.³⁸ At this late stage, the editor was asked to write a box summarizing the ideas and evidence for the market-friendly approach.³⁹ He wrote, 'In the past twenty years a consensus has emerged among economists on the best approach to economic development... These ideas have crystallized into what is now called the "market-friendly" approach.'

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By making these concessions, Page and Birdsall hoped to protect two key ideas in what they had earlier called 'strategy'. One was that growth is a function of three sets of policies—those to foster accumulation, efficient allocation, and growth in productivity. Whereas the standard, market-friendly neoclassical argument stresses the need for good performance on all of four dimensions—macroeconomic stability, trade openness, human capital, and a rule-based system hospitable to the private sector—Page and Birdsall thought that there is some substitutability between the policies for accumulation, allocation, and productivity. Hence it is conceptually possible that costs in allocative efficiency (due to distorting industrial policies) are more than offset by gains in productivity (due to learning). The second idea is that markets—effective coordinating mechanisms for private agents in many contexts—may not work well for large and uneven investments in the early stages of development; for these, other mechanisms are needed, such as 'deliberative councils'. But how to stop deliberative councils from becoming cosy havens for sharing out rents? Through contests between selected firms competing within tight rules and under the watchful eye of the government as referee.⁴⁰

³⁷ *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy*, p. 88, figure 2.1

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. vi

³⁹ *Ibid.*, box 2.1, p. 85.

⁴⁰ 'Government as referee' has a powerful resonance in neoclassical economics, and the link to contests takes it towards East Asian realities; but it obscures the point that the government sometimes acts as both referee and player at the same time.

Other parts of the report also came in for strong criticism from elsewhere in the Bank—all the more so now that Summers had left⁴¹—but in the final version they appeared little changed. The section on directed credit and financial repression was attacked for making too many concessions to the view that these instruments could sometimes work. Page countered that the section did not, as the critics contended, repudiate the Bank line: it clearly stated that there is no *proof* that directed credit worked in Japan and Korea but also that the normal adverse effects of directed credit are *not* seen in those countries. Similarly on the wider question of financial repression, Page countered trenchant internal criticism by urging the critics to read carefully what the text actually said. While admitting the fact of financial repression in Japan and Korea, the text's explanation for why the normal adverse effects on growth are not observed was not out-of-line with established Bank thinking: these effects are not apparent because the degree of repression has been *moderate*—thanks to macroeconomic balance and only slightly concessional interest rates for priority uses. This section of the report was of greatest interest to its Japanese sponsors. Its credibility was bolstered by the pre-eminent status in the American economics profession of its main author, Joseph Stiglitz, winner of the John Bates Clark medal for outstanding work by an economist under the age of forty. In the event, despite all the criticism, the section was left largely unchanged.

The 'institutional basis' chapter, though already diluted, was attacked as the document proceeded up the hierarchy of approval. Many critics called for references to authoritarianism to be dropped. Birdsall and Page defended the chapter successfully, managing to retain oblique references to authoritarianism.⁴²

As the deadline loomed, intense effort was made to present a consistent message.⁴³ The Bank's senior in-house editor was called in. He pasted each chapter page by page along the wall of a conference room. Together with several members of the team, he took a bird's-eye view, suggesting how to bring the messages up front. He paid special attention to the headings, on the presumption that many readers do not go beyond them. Headings should themselves give the argument, he urged. Parts of the draft were revised to emphasize the neoclassical 'fundamentals'. Results of the econometric tests of the effectiveness of selective industrial policy were rephrased to make them more clearly contra than in the original draft.

Page later explained his principle for responding to criticism: if he agreed that the evidence was not strong enough to support a certain proposition, he toned down the statement, regardless of whether it

⁴¹ To be Under Secretary to the Treasury for International Affairs in the new Clinton administration.

⁴² See for example, *The East Asian Miracle*, p 188.

⁴³ The draft was also debated in a Singapore round-table discussion (including senior or ex-senior government officials from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia) and in Tokyo—three meetings with individual senior officials who gave detailed comments on the first draft: Kubota (MOF), Tsukuda (number two in the OCBF), and Ogata (Deputy Governor, Bank of Japan). Individual chapters were presented by members of the Bank team to academic seminars in Singapore, Indonesia, and Korea.

was Bank orthodoxy or not. At the same time, he had to recognize that this was a World Bank document with an 'anonymous' author that sets out a 'Bank' position. So it should steer between the extremes, never straying outside the range of views represented within the Bank. Yet the team members were also anxious not simply to repeat the Bank's standard line, and saw themselves as a vanguard pushing out the frontiers of debate. They were also well aware of the importance of Japan to the World Bank and of Japan's interest in the conclusions. A senior manager later remarked: 'Without the strong leadership of Larry Summers, Nancy Birdsall, and John Page, the report would not have moved anything like as far [from Bank orthodoxy] as it did.'

VII. Argument and Evidence

The final document bears traces of the three-way tussle between Japan, the research vice-presidency, and the East Asian vice-presidency. It concedes for the first time in a major Bank publication the *fact* of extensive government intervention in most of East Asia. It also grants the argument that some of these interventions, in the areas of exports and credit, *may* have fostered growth and equity in some parts of East Asia. Further, the report states that 'More selective interventions—forced savings, tax policies to promote (sometimes very specific) investments, sharing risk, restricting capital outflow, and repressing interest rates also *appear to have succeeded* in some HPARs [High Performing Asian Economies], especially Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan, China.'⁴⁴ And again: 'Our evidence leads us to conclude that credit programmes directed at exports yielded high social returns and, in the cases of Japan and Korea, other directed-credit programmes also *may have increased investment and generated important spill-overs*.'⁴⁵

Lewis Preston's preface is significant because it is the President who ultimately must keep the main shareholders happy, and in this case the number two shareholder evidently needed to be made less unhappy. The preface was written within the core team and did not have to fight its way past the East Asian vice-presidency. It says, for example, 'This diversity of [East Asian] experience reinforces the view that economic policies and policy advice must be country-specific, if they are to be effective ... The report also breaks some new ground. It concludes that in some economies, mainly those in Northeast Asia, *some selective interventions contributed to growth*, and it advances our understanding of the conditions required for interventions to succeed ... These prerequisites suggest that the institutional context within which policies are implemented is as important to their success or failure as the policies themselves.'⁴⁶ These are Japanese-style statements. Despite all the pressures for the Bank not to admit it has been wrong, the President of the Bank here hints at just that. The preface does not even use the normal protective cover; it says 'some selective interventions contributed to growth', without the 'may have'. A cynic might say that the 'some selective interventions

⁴⁴ *The East Asian Miracle*, p. 242, emphasis added.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 356, emphasis added.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. vi, emphasis added.

contributed to growth' statement by Preston, plus the line in the text on page 356 ('other directed-credit programmes also may have increased investment and generated important spill-overs') are the nuggets for which the Japanese paid \$1.2 million.

The rest of the text takes a much stronger anti-industrial policy line. The flavour of the overall document is expressed in statements like 'industrial policies were largely ineffective', and 'We conclude that promotion of specific industries generally did not work and therefore holds little promise for other developing economies'.⁴⁷ It is not surprising that the bulk of the report gives a strong endorsement of established World Bank ideas. We saw earlier why the Japanese ideas constitute a serious threat. But the Bank cannot credibly reject ideas just because they are a threat. It has to claim to reject them on the evidence—of which the *Miracle* provides lots for its anti-industrial policy arguments.

The trouble, as several analysts have shown, is that most of the evidence does not survive serious scrutiny.⁴⁸ Here are three examples:

1) The key proposition that more open economies grow faster than closed ones is based on the finding that indicators of openness are positively correlated with growth in the basic growth regression. One indicator of openness is an index constructed by David Dollar. As Dani Rodrik argues, the index is really a measure of real exchange rate divergence, not of openness.⁴⁹ But if used as an index of openness, Dollar's own published results reveal that Japan and Taiwan were *less open* during 1976–85 than Argentina, Brazil, India, Mexico, the Philippines, and Turkey—a result ignored by the *Miracle* study. Rodrik concludes that the evidence presented for the proposition that more open economies grow faster is simply not relevant. To the extent that it is, it points the other way. And here as throughout, had China been included, the evidence would have pointed still more strongly the other way.⁵⁰ Since the early 1980s, China has been outperforming most developing countries, yet it has remained—while liberalizing—much less liberal than most, with extensive controls on finance, trade and industry.

2) The report says that 'price distortions were mild', or that 'East Asia's relative prices of traded goods were closer on average to international

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 312, 354.

⁴⁸ See the papers by Rodrik, Wade and Haggard in Fishlow et al, eds, *Miracle or Design?*, Ajit Singh, 'How did East Asia Grow so Fast? Slow Progress Towards an Analytical Consensus', UNCTAD Discussion Paper no. 97, 1995; Alice Amsden, 'Why Isn't the Whole World Experimenting with the East Asian Model to Develop? Review of *The East Asian Miracle*', *World Development*, vol. 22, no. 4, (1994) pp. 627–34; Sanjay Lall, 'The East Asian Miracle: Does the Bell Toll for Industrial Strategy?', *World Development*, vol. 22, no. 4, (1994) pp. 645–54; Aadne Cappelen and Jan Fagerberg, 'East Asian Growth: A Critical Assessment', *Forum for Development Studies*, no. 2, 1995. See further, Michael Hirsch, 'The State Strikes Back', *Institutional Investor*, September 1992, pp. 82–92 (for which I was a prime source).

⁴⁹ Dani Rodrik, 'King Kong Meets Godzilla: The World Bank and the East Asian Miracle', in *Miracle or Design?*, pp. 35–9.

⁵⁰ The set of High Performing Asian Economies includes Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia; not China and not the Philippines.

prices than other developing areas'.⁵¹ This generalization is important for the argument that, while industrial policies existed in East Asia, their magnitude was slight. But the report also acknowledges that the relative prices of Japan, Korea, and Taiwan deviated *more* from international prices than those of such notorious interventionists as India, Pakistan, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela in 1976-85, another finding it does not comment upon.⁵² How does it reach the vital conclusion about low average price distortions? By averaging the price distortion scores of all eight East Asian cases, including the Hong Kong and Singapore minnows.

3) One of the tests of the effectiveness or otherwise of sector-specific industrial promotion uses the correlation between growth in output or value added by different industries, and the level of wages or value added per worker in the same industries.⁵³ If sectoral industrial policies made a difference, the argument goes, we expect a positive correlation, because industrial policies aim to favour capital- and technology-intensive industries and these factor intensities are proxied by high wages. So if industries that grow faster also have higher wages, this means that the more capital- or technology-intensive industries are growing faster, and industrial policies can be declared successful. Conversely, if the correlation is negative we have grounds for concluding that structural change is driven not by industrial policy but by market forces. It can be argued that the test is mis-specified.⁵⁴ But the problem is with what the report does with its own evidence. The results for several time periods yield mostly positive correlations (pro-industrial policy) for Hong Kong, and Japan, and mostly negative ones (pro-free-market forces) for Taiwan and Korea. But none of the results is statistically significant—except the negative correlations for Korea. The report still concludes that these results confirm the *ineffectiveness* of industrial policy in East Asia.

The Middle Road

Once such standards of inference are allowed to leak into what we call 'evidence', confirming results can be pumped out like bilge water.⁵⁵ It is a fine irony that when the one member of the team with work experience in Asia suggested some discussion of cultural propensities to save and educate, he was told the matter could not be discussed because of lack of evidence. The weakness of evidence notwithstanding, the argument sweeps to its paradigm-protecting conclusions on the strength of several rhetorical techniques. One is to structure an argument as a triptych with two extremes and a middle, our confidence in the middle being elevated by the foolishness of what flanks it. In the *Miracle* we are shown two cartoonish interpretations of East Asian success—laissez faire and government intervention—and then the sensible market-friendly approach in between. This was, however, a late addition. Together with the removal of 'strategy' and 'strategic', it was part of the price of acquiescence from the East Asian vice-presidency, and the means by which the

⁵¹ *The East Asian Miracle*, pp. 24, 301.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 301.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, table A6.2.

⁵⁴ As does Rodrik in 'King Kong Meets Godzilla'.

⁵⁵ There are many other examples of dubious evidence in the report; see the papers by Rodrik, Wade and Haggard in *Miracle or Design?*, and the references cited therein.

chief economist of the East Asia region could propel the conclusions of his *World Development Report 1991* to the forefront of the Bank's thinking on development. The report also seeks to persuade by ignoring serious alternative explanations of East Asian economic success. The main alternatives to such ideas as 'market-friendly policies plus export-push policies yield export-led growth' are not 'laissez faire' or 'government intervention'. Indeed, no serious scholar has argued that the difference between East Asia and elsewhere is to be explained mainly in terms of government intervention.

The main alternative, rather, is 'favourable initial conditions—especially human capital and infrastructure—plus investment-led growth'. The causality runs from higher investment to faster technical change and higher imports, and from these to higher exports—these exports being more a result than a cause.⁵⁶ Certainly, export growth helped to maintain the key driving force—high rates of return on accumulation (by permitting economies of scale), but so, too, did rising skill levels and an array of government policies designed to boost productivity and keep the lid on income inequality. Sectoral industrial policies enter the explanation as an important cause of high rates of *aggregate* investment as well as a cause of the structure of that investment, helping East Asia to move quickly from the 'factor-cost' driven stage of competitiveness to the 'investment' driven stage.⁵⁷ Of course the report notes the fact of unusually high investment in East Asia, but sees it as more a *result* of market-friendly policies and export-push than as being itself the primary proximate driver—though without doing the econometric tests to examine the causality. As for the fast growth of Southeast Asia—Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia—the report assumes the causes to lie in domestic factors, and fails to examine the extent to which their growth can be explained in terms of spill-over effects from the fast growth of the more nationally focused, governed-market economies of East Asia.

Furthermore, the report tries to persuade by employing asymmetrical standards of evidence. As the drafts progressed, the many critics who asked 'what exactly is your evidence?' were concerned only with the pro-intervention propositions. They took for granted that if the evidence was not compelling it should be discounted, but did not apply the same scrutiny to propositions in favour of the free market. The market is innocent until proven guilty, the government is guilty until proven innocent.

⁵⁶Indeed, Irene Trella and John Whalley go so far as to conclude, from their own quantitative analysis and that of others, that 'outward-oriented policies in Korea have little significance in driving growth' Trella and Whalley, 'The Role of Tax Policy in Korea's Economic Growth', in T. Ito and A. Krueger, eds, *The Political Economy of Tax Reform*, Chicago 1992. See also Colin Bradford, 'From Trade-Driven Growth to Growth-Driven Trade. Reappraising the East Asian Development Experience', OECD Development Center, 1992; Dani Rodrik, 'Getting Interventions Right: How South Korea and Taiwan Grew Rich', mimeo, Economics Department, Columbia University, 1994; UNCTAD, 'The Visible Hand and the Industrialization of East Asia', *Trade and Development Report*, 1994; and Robert Wade, *Governing the Market*, pp. 47–8, chapters 6 and 9. Nor does the report examine what many analysts, though few economists, consider to be central to East Asia's economic success: the 'informal sector', the skeins of relational networks that operate behind the apparently formal institutions of finance, business and government across the region.

⁵⁷M.E. Porter, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, New York 1990, ch. 10.

Finally, the report fails to make explicit some key distinctions, with the effect of allowing readers more scope for interpreting the results in line with their preconceptions. The striking case in point concerns credit. The Japanese were especially interested in getting the Bank to admit that directed credit—targeted at particular sectors—had worked in Japan and elsewhere in East Asia. But the Bank is deeply committed to the view that selective industrial promotion cannot raise national welfare, and so needs to conclude that it did not do so in East Asia. Since directed credit is, it would seem, simply one instrument of selective industrial policy, the two propositions—Japan's directed credit, the Bank's selective industrial policy—cannot both be true at the same time. Yet the report manages to imply that they are. It does so by classifying interventions into three ostensibly non-overlapping categories: selective industrial policies, directed credit policies, and export-push policies. It concludes that the first failed, the third worked, and as for the second—the focus of Japanese interest—it states, as we have seen, 'that credit programmes directed at exports yielded high social returns, and, in the cases of Japan and Korea, other directed credit programmes also may have increased investment and generated important spill-overs'.⁵⁸ On the face of it, this says that for Japan and Korea directed credit may have been *effective* as an instrument of sectoral industrial policy, though the report also claims that sectoral industrial policy did *not* work. Dani Rodrik writes that 'It is difficult to fathom how [such a logical inconsistency] found its way into the report (and as a major conclusion, to boot)'.⁵⁹

Part of the reason was an editorial failure to make a clear distinction between two types of 'directed' or 'selective' policies: 'functional' and 'sectoral', where 'functional' refers to a non-sector-specific function, like R&D or exports, and 'sectoral' refers to specific sectors—chemicals or machine tools, for example. When the text talks of 'selective' industrial policy it means 'sectoral' or 'sector-specific'; when it talks of 'selective' or 'directed' credit policy, however, it means 'functional'. Its only evidence on directed credit for other than exports comes from a study of the effects of subsidized R&D credit in Japan—that is, a study of a functionally-directed, not sectorally-directed credit policy. On the basis of this study, the report says that (functionally) directed credit worked in Japan in the sense that it had higher social returns than private returns, made a net addition to R&D investment rather than substituting for more expensive commercial credit, and was cut off when no longer needed. So the Bank's conclusion about directed or selective credit applies to functionally-selective policy, while its conclusion about selective industrial policy applies to sectorally-selective policy. Why was such an obvious source of confusion allowed to persist? The effect of fudging the distinction between functional and sectoral was to allow those sympathetic to the Japanese position on credit to infer a greater agreement with that position than was actually the case.

VIII. Responses

In August 1993 the World Bank executive directors (EDs, the represen-

⁵⁸ *The East Asian Miracle*, p. 356.

⁵⁹ Rodrik, 'King Kong Meets Godzilla', p. 28.

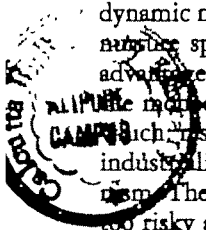
tatives of member states who act as overseers) considered the final draft. Their reactions showed nothing like consensus. The US ED gave a glowing endorsement of what he took to be the free-market message of the report. (Some of the core team were disturbed to hear how he spin-doctored all their qualifications away.) The newly arrived Japanese ED was cautiously complimentary. The Argentinian ED said, angrily, that the whole report was an apologia for interventionism. The Indian ED came close to saying that the report's anti-interventionist conclusions were fixed in advance and the evidence tailored to fit. Few changes were made in response to the Board's comments. If one is being attacked from all sides, Page later explains, the argument must be about right. Indeed, unknown to the EDs, the document had already been typeset by the time of the Board discussion to ensure readiness for the Annual Meetings. It could not have been changed even if the EDs agreed on changes.⁶⁰ The incident illustrates the independence of the Bank staff from the Board, despite the Board's status as the supervisory body representing member countries.

On September 26, 1993, exactly on time, *The East Asia Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy* was launched at the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and IMF. There was a press conference, a press release, and a seminar for Annual Meeting participants. The report 'sells itself', because of outside interest. The diversity of views among the EDs was a microcosm of reactions outside the Bank. In the press, for example, some journalists (mainly Japanese) said that the study confirmed the effectiveness and replicability of East Asia's government interventions. Others (mainly American and British) said that it confirmed their ineffectiveness and unreplicability. The London *Financial Times* led its review of the report with, '*Industrial policies to promote particular sectors or companies have been a failure in East Asia* and do not explain the region's rapid growth in recent decades, according to a World Bank study'. The *Nihon Kaizai Shinbun*, Japan's leading business paper, said 'the report cites the accumulation of high-grade human and physical capital as a motivating force and *highly evaluates the effects of government intervention*...' ⁶¹

MOF officials celebrated the fact that the Bank had at last admitted that state intervention can be useful, but were also critical of some of the conclusions. In December 1993 former executive director Masaki Shiratori, now posted to the OECF, delivered a hard-hitting critique at a seminar in Tokyo. He argued that 'Comparative advantage should be regarded as a

⁶⁰ The version sent to the Board had been revised in the month between being sent to the Board and actually being discussed by it. Many of the revisions addressed issues that the Board brought up, and were subsequently reported to the Board as being made *in response* to Board suggestions.

⁶¹ *Financial Times*, 27 September 1993, p. 16. *Nihon Kaizai Shinbun*, 26 September 1993, p. 7, emphases added. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* (owned by the American firm Dow Jones) concludes from the study that 'today the price of growth is eternal vigilance against sometimes well-intentioned efforts to "help" selected industries or otherwise substitute bureaucratic preferences for the millions of individual decisions that each day constitute the wisdom of the marketplace' (21 October 1993, p. 5). The *Daily Yomiuri* begins its report, 'Economic policies that fuelled East Asia's dynamic economic growth over the past thirty years can also work in other developing regions of the world, according to a new World Bank study...' (27 September 1993, p. 7).



dynamic notion rather a static one... It is theoretically right to pick and choose specific promising industries which do not have comparative advantage now. Many developing countries desperately need to get rid of public monoculture in such commodities as coffee, cocoa, copper and tin, such as resulted from static comparative advantage... A latecomer to industrialization can not afford to leave everything to the market mechanism. The trial and error inherent in market-driven industrialization is too risky and expensive considering the scarcity of resources.' He went on to make a number of theoretical and technical points against the Total Factor Productivity test of the effectiveness of selective industrial policy, concluding, 'In view of these theoretical and technical problems in the Report's analysis of industrial policy, I hope further studies will be made within and outside the World Bank. In the meantime, I sincerely wish that the Bank will adopt "pragmatic flexibility" in prescribing policy advice to developing countries'.⁶² Isao Kubota concluded his remarks at the same seminar, saying: 'Perhaps the best lesson could be that policy makers and policy advisers, including those in the World Bank, should not be dogmatic but be pragmatic. For that purpose *modesty, not arrogance, and a sincere attitude* toward finding the right policy measures, are essential'.⁶³

A senior MOF official close to the *Miracle* study characterized MOF and MITI reactions as follows: 'MOF people consider this a good step forward, although they are not fully satisfied with the study's negative assessment on industrial policy. The reaction of the MITI people is mixed: they share the MOF view, on the one hand, but they are afraid to be accused of excessive intervention *now* in the course of negotiations with the US and the EC'. He referred to MITI concerns as expressed by, for example, Makoto Kuroda, MITI's best known hard-line negotiator with the US: 'We must not provide a dangerous basis for the argument that says Japan conducts itself by a different set of rules and must be treated differently... For some time I have repeatedly stated that we should avoid expressions such as "Japanese-style practices"'.⁶⁴

Opinion about the *Miracle* study within MITI differed between the two key bureaux, the International Trade Bureau and the Industrial Policy Bureau. The former is preoccupied with maintaining access to the *American* market, for which avowed commitment to 'free-market' and 'level playing field' symbols is important; people from this bureau tended to be enthusiastic about the study's conclusion that selective industrial

⁶² Masaki Shiratori, 'The Role of Government in Economic Development: Comments on the "East Asian Miracle" Study', paper presented to ORCF seminar on the *East Asian Miracle*, Tokyo, 3 December 1993.

⁶³ Isao Kubota, 'On the "Asian Miracle"', mimeo, Ministry of Finance 1993, his emphasis. An American source close to the Bank, who has talked at length to senior MOF officials about the report, characterizes their reaction as follows: 'We feel intellectually vindicated, because the report does recognize that selective credit has worked effectively in Japan and Korea. We are now beginning to find our intellectual voice on development issues, even if our voice does not yet match the size of our financial contribution. We regard the *Miracle* study as a start. We will now wait, regroup, and exert quiet pressure on the Bank to be more pragmatic in its policy advice.'

⁶⁴ Chalmers Johnson, 'History Restarted: Japanese-American relations at the End of the Century', in R. Higgott, R. Leaver, and J. Ravenhill, eds, *Pacific Economic Relations in the 1990s: Conflict or Cooperation?*, 1993, p. 59.

policy has, by and large, been ineffective in East Asia. The Industrial Policy Bureau, by contrast, is committed to boosting the idea of MITI's successful steerage of the Japanese economy, and people from this Bureau tended to be more critical of the study. MOF's critical stance may reflect its concerns to maintain a strategic aid programme using directed credit and other infant industry incentives. The two agendas—that of the International Trade Bureau of MITI and that of MOF—may reflect a single higher-level strategy: to maintain access to the American market over the five-year middle-run, while building up a dense presence in the Southeast Asian and China markets for the ten-year longer run, at the end of which these markets are expected to be more important than the American.⁶⁵

Within the Board of the Bank, Shiratori's successor as Japan's executive director was less active. He did not push the concerns that lay behind Japan's promotion of the *Miracle* study. This may reflect a high-level decision in Tokyo to calm relations with the World Bank in order to avoid causing even more turbulence in Japan's relations with the US. As part of this calming strategy, the Japanese government agreed with the Bank that Japan's directed credit programmes, though they continue, will not use *narrow* earmarking (will not define beneficiaries narrowly) and will not have a *big* subsidy element (not more than one or two percentage points below the market rate).

As for the Bank's response, a top manager said 'We simply cannot afford to take a more custom-tailored approach to lending conditions, as the Japanese have been urging. If we were to say to the Philippines, "It is OK for Malaysia to do this but not for you", we could be accused of violating the political impartiality condition of our charter.'⁶⁶

No follow-up research has been planned. The director of the research department explained that 'the real issue is the relevance of the East Asian experience for other developing countries... *Now the East Asian study is completed, the research agenda lies more in Africa and other developing countries than it does in East Asia.*'⁶⁷ He took for granted that 'the East Asian experience' is the experience as interpreted in the *East Asian Miracle*.

IX. The Art of Paradigm Maintenance—and Change

Our story raises a more general question. How does the World Bank—a large institution, with some four thousand professional staff drawn

⁶⁵ Indeed, a watershed has already been reached in Japan's trade: for the first time, the surplus with Asia exceeded the surplus with the US in the fiscal year 1993–94.

⁶⁶ This is from an American source close to senior levels of the Bank (and himself a former senior official), who asked the most senior manager for his view of the report.

⁶⁷ See Lyn Squire, remarks in *Proceedings of the Symposium on the East Asian Miracle*, Tokyo 1993, emphasis added. The Bank may have continued to do a little more, on the research side, if any of the three main protagonists, Summers, Birdsall, and Page, had remained in or close to their positions; but they all moved far from where they could influence the follow-up. Nancy Birdsall went on to be executive vice-president of the Inter-American Development Bank, John Page became Chief Economist for the Bank's Middle East region, and Lawrence Summers, as we have seen, joined the Clinton administration.

from many countries,⁶⁸ producing dozens of public reports a year—manage to deliver what the outside world hears as a single central message? The art of paradigm maintenance begins with the choice of staff. As noted, about 80 per cent of Bank economists are North American or British trained, and all but a few share the preconceptions of mainstream Anglo-American economics.⁶⁹ If they were to show sympathy for other ideas—if they were to argue that sectoral industrial policies can in some circumstances be effective, for example—they would be unlikely to be selected for the Bank, on grounds of incompetence. The organization's few non-economist social scientists are employed on marginal issues like resettlement and participation, like anthropologists by colonial administrations before them.

But within the staff there remains a range of views that command some following. The second technique of paradigm maintenance is the internal review process. A document goes through rounds of discussions at successively higher levels of the hierarchy, each level being a filter that narrows the range of views espoused by 'the Bank'. It is not just that higher levels are more concerned with the Bank's and the system's integrity than with the integrity of the research. It is also that promotion criteria select people for the higher levels who make decisions quickly and with closure, using 'facts' selectively to support pre-conceived patterns and convictions. Such people tend to be intolerant of those who do not share the conclusions to which they leap.⁷⁰

Thirdly, the legions of Bank editors, some in-house, some employed as consultants, are a part of the maintenance mechanism. Their continued employment depends not only upon their ability to write clear English but also on their ability to write copy that, being in line with 'Bank thinking', will not attract criticism.

This is the review and editing mechanism. The criteria applied are partly formal and partly substantive. The formal criteria relate particularly to the need for a clear 'message'. Great emphasis is placed on having a clear message, on minimizing 'on the one hand, on the other hand' statements which are thought confusing to the intended audience of policy-makers. (Indeed, the early meetings of the writing team are often taken up with discussion of 'What are going to be the key messages of this report?', before the research is done.) The message is to consist not of a setting out of possible alternatives and conditions in which they make more or less sense, and still less of acknowledgement that the evidence is mixed or insufficient, but is to consist of the best policy for the 'typical' developing country. This makes for 'clarity'.

⁶⁸ In Bank parlance, Higher Level Staff. Total staff, including temporaries, in Financial Year 1994 was just over eight thousand.

⁶⁹ Bruno Frey et al, 'Consensus and Dissensus Among Economists. An Empirical Inquiry', *American Economic Review*, vol. 74, no. 1, (1984).

⁷⁰ This is based on the Myers-Briggs personality inventory, administered to over 1,000 Bank managers in the early to mid-1990s. The results show that over two-thirds of Bank managers (directors, division chiefs, task managers) are 'TJs', and that among directors (just below vice-presidents) 70 per cent process information in an 'Intuitive' (patterns, linkages) rather than 'Sensing' (detailed) kind of way, compared to 58 per cent of division chiefs.

The need for a clear and consistent message for policy-makers has implications for the content of the message. The members of the team, partly propelled by professional norms, may be concerned to speak the truth as they see it. But at the higher levels reviewers are sensitive to the more 'systemic' pressures for paradigm maintenance discussed earlier—the need not to upset capital markets, and the self-perception of the Bank as a bulwark against the vested interests that push governments to intervene in socially counter-productive ways. Their comments page by page are unlikely to allude directly to these systemic pressures. Rather, they insist that everything should fit the overall message.

This is the mechanism for conformity. All prominent Bank documents go through it. But what issues get onto the Bank's agenda in the first place? On the whole, the Bank has been a reactive rather than proactive organization, taking its lead from outside. The Bank ensures its own expansion and centrality by launching bids for expert status on some of the issues at the top of the current agenda of development debate, proposing market solutions with compensatory or mitigating elements, creating a consensus around its position, and marginalizing more radical alternatives.⁷¹ Outside the Bank, the debate then tends to configure itself into 'pro- or anti-' Bank positions. This might be called, tongue-in-cheek, a Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the World Bank.

The East Asian Miracle can be read as the latest expression of this strategy. East Asia and industrial policy came to centre stage in the late 1980s, as the US and European economies continued to limp and East Asian economies continued to soar. The new element in the situation, compared to, say, a report on Africa or the Bank's poverty work in the late 1980s, is that the number two shareholder was putting pressure on the Bank to endorse, or at least make some concession to, its non-orthodox views about development principles. The mere centrality of the issue in the development debate would not have been sufficient to prompt the Bank to make a special study, for the issue was at once too indirectly tied to lending and too likely to annoy the Japanese or to complicate the Bank's policy formula.⁷² But when Japan agreed to pay for the study and to drop its opposition to the operational directive on financial sector reform the Bank could not say no.

These initiating circumstances made it important for the team leader to

⁷¹ Peter Gibbon, 'The World Bank and the New Politics of Aid', *European Journal of Development Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, (1993) pp. 35–62

⁷² I worked in the Bank's Trade Policy division in 1987–88, at the time when a team from the division was formulating a paper setting out the Bank's trade policy and its empirical and conceptual underpinnings. As a member of the same small division, I repeatedly urged the team to examine East Asia's import-control regime, and especially to consider whether the regime contained design features that enabled Japan, Korea, and Taiwan—all three having highly protected economies for long periods—to escape some of the expected neoclassical costs. I indicated possible mechanisms (as in 'Managing Trade: Taiwan and South Korea as Challenges to Economics and Political Science', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 25, no. 2, (1993) pp. 147–67; and, 'How to Protect Exports from Protection: Taiwan's Duty Drawback Scheme', *The World Economy*, vol. 14, September 1991, pp. 299–310), and offered to provide relevant literature. But the team was unwilling even to consider the possibility that protection East Asian-style might have brought benefits as well as costs; and the trade policy paper refers to the import-control regimes in East Asia *only* in terms of their liberalization. See 'Strengthening Trade Policy Reform', World Bank, Washington DC, November 1989

be someone known to be solidly in the mainstream of Bank thinking, not a doctrinaire free marketeer. John Page met this condition; his pedigree, as a student of Ian Little's and protégé of Anne Krueger's,⁷³ was conservative, but he had subsequently espoused more pragmatic views. Likely candidates from the East Asia vice-presidency were either free marketeers or too much under their hierarchical command. Even so, the universalistic and non-institutional ethos of neoclassical economics meant that no premium was given to selecting people for the core team who had expertise in East Asia—whether Bank staff or consultants. Any Bank economist is expected to be an expert on a country or region within a matter of months.

As we have seen, the East Asia vice-presidency was excluded. True, it got the country studies, but these were largely ignored by the core team. Yet the East Asia vice-presidency could not be prevented from being the major reviewer, because in the higher level review committees the East Asia vice-president met the Research vice-president on equal terms—and with much more personal influence in the Bank where he had spent his whole career. If the East Asia vice-president decided to do so, he could effectively prevent or at least delay the report in its path to the Board, and so hinder its publication. The cross-pressures among the Japanese sponsors, the core team, and the East Asian vice-presidency help to explain the report's inconsistencies.

Inconsistency as a Register for Change

The inconsistencies should not be seen simply as 'mistakes'. The authors may have left them in—to the extent that they were aware of them⁷⁴—in an attempt to *widen* the grounds of debate without generating a backlash that would cause the report to be dismissed as incompetent or ideological, and the Bank to be accused of changing its mind. The pro-industrial policy statements, though at odds with the rest of the report, may function as attractor points by enabling those wishing to put new questions on the agenda to claim legitimacy from the *Miracle* study. This, it could be argued, is the most likely way that big organizations change their minds; sharp changes are rare.

The Japanese have influenced the Bank enough to provide attractor points beyond those in the *Miracle* study itself. The several studies of Japanese economic policy and civil service organization sponsored by the Bank at about the same time—and also paid for by the Japanese—provide a set of policy ideas that can legitimize further work in these domains, outside and inside the Bank. In particular, the Bank's impropri-

⁷³ Ian Little was professor of economics at Oxford University, Anne Krueger was World Bank vice-president for research, and both are well-known conservative economists. See for example Little, *Economic Development: Theory, Policy and International Relations*, New York 1982.

⁷⁴ My argument does not imply that these techniques were deliberately deployed in an attempt to maintain the Bank's central beliefs. One does not need to embrace postmodernism to agree that people's commitment to a particular paradigm has a large subjective element—is underdetermined by the evidence—and that they are largely unaware of how the commitment is protected, by themselves and others, from contrary evidence or interpretations.

matur can help legitimize the idea of 'Japan as model' for *Japan's* use in its own more dirigist Asian aid strategy, further strengthening the constituency for these ideas. It may also be argued that the Bank's softening of its stand against directed credit, as of 1995, owes something to the wider Japanese pressure on the Bank. Compared to the 1980s, the Bank is now less likely to insist that directed credit and interest rate subsidies should always be avoided. It is more likely to insist simply that the onus must be on the proposer to explain the special circumstances justifying directed credit in a given case.⁷⁵ The shift is small but not trivial, and gives the Bank more flexibility in responding to Japan's continued use of directed credit.

Although the Japanese government has ceased pressuring the Bank, it has not stopped promulgating its ideas in developing countries. Seeing 'the Japanese approach to industrial policy' as a new export product, it is building up an enormous capacity for teaching Asian bureaucrats, industrialists and scholars about the Japanese approach to industrial policy. One of the leading figures in this campaign recently declared, 'Free market theory has failed in many areas like Russia, Eastern Europe, and Sub-Saharan Africa because it is too short sighted and too market oriented. Not enough attention was paid to these countries' own economic and social structures... Japan started from a planned economy post war, to become gradually liberalized over the years. I would say we are now 80 per cent of the way to being a free market economy. In developing countries it should be more like 50 per cent. We are not saying that developing countries should imitate Japan. But they do need to study an alternative to neo-classical economic theory'. To supply them with such an alternative, in 1995 between 500 and 600 foreign government officials will attend courses in economic development run by the ministries of international trade and industry, finance, foreign affairs, and the Bank of Japan. Scores of Japanese officials will also leave Tokyo on secondment to governments in developing countries, or to swell the small ranks of Japanese officials in multilateral development agencies. Most of the countries targeted for receiving this attention are also lucrative markets for Japanese goods.⁷⁶

The argument raises two wider points. The first is about the Bank's research function. The Bank's legitimacy depends upon the authority

⁷⁵ And it would point out that the question cannot be debated without making several distinctions. credit may be directed by region, by urban/rural, by small firm/large firm, by sector, by sub-sector, it may contain a larger or smaller element of subsidy; the amount of subsidy may be calculated in relation to the cost of lending or in relation to the price that the lender would otherwise charge, directed credit may comprise a larger or a smaller percentage of total credit, and so on.

⁷⁶ The quoted official is Mr Katruhisa Yamada, director of Japan's Institute of Developing Economics. See William Dawkins, 'Pedlars of the Japanese Model to Developing World', *Financial Times*, 7 February 1995. The Japanese are also helping to keep the debate going in the OECD academic world. During 1994 OECF invited scholars in OECD countries to write short comments on the *Miracle* study. For the eight comments from UK-based respondents plus two Japanese commentaries on the *Miracle* see *Journal of Development Assistance* (Research Institute of Development Assistance, OECF), vol. 1, NO. 1, JULY 1995 (in English). OECF's OECD country offices have also arranged meetings with academics in their respective countries to discuss papers such as the Economic Planning Agency's 'Possibility of the Application of Japanese Experience from the Standpoint of the Developing Countries', November 1994.

of its views; like the Vatican, and for similar reasons, it cannot afford to admit fallibility. At the same time, many of the Bank's research publications, especially the high visibility ones like the *World Development Reports*, are really *advocacy* statements, steered by the bedrock perception that the Bank must act as a counterweight to all the gravitational pulls towards excessive government intervention—which justifies erring on the side of markets. Hence for good organizational and political reasons the Bank's research is biased towards the conclusion that 'there is no alternative' to government policies that stay within the bounds of 'strengthening the enabling environment for private sector development'. The Bank's endorsement of this tenet is important for its authoritative image in the eyes of the interlocking social groups who embrace the 'Washington consensus'. The research must also be largely quantitative, for numbers and econometric technique themselves confer authority. Research that meets these criteria thus helps to maximize staff commitment internally and authoritative reputation externally, and in turn colours the 'reality' against which those leaders of economic opinion check their expectations of the future. But its conclusions are not necessarily those that are most consistent with the evidence.

The second point concerns the Bank's autonomy. Our case study shows the Bank fending off a challenge to its way of seeing from its second largest shareholder. On the face of it, this looks like autonomy. It seems consistent with William Ascher's argument that 'the viability of a development objective or strategy to be implemented through the World Bank depends not only on the acquiescence of the obvious international actors—the nation states through their formal institutional representation and their various pressures—but also on its congruence with the professional role models of the relevant staff. If the staff perceives the strategy or objectives as a "decline in standards", as requiring them to become more "political" vis-à-vis the borrower governments... its viability is doubtful unless altered role models can be quickly inculcated, new incentives provided, or rapid staff turnover undertaken.'⁷⁷

The problem is not that this argument is wrong, as far as it goes, but that it stops short of asking about the structure of power in which the Bank operates, and how that structure affects the Bank's response to new development approaches. The story of *The East Asian Miracle* shows the determining importance of essentially American values and interests in the functioning of the Bank.⁷⁸ But the influence is exerted not mainly from the American government to the senior management of the Bank—if we look just at this relationship we see considerable autonomy, though the President has always been American. The influence comes partly through the Bank's dependence on world financial markets, and the self-reinforcing congruence between the values of the owners and managers of financial capital and those of the US state. It also

⁷⁷ Ascher, 'New Development Approaches and the Adaptability of International Agencies', p. 436.

⁷⁸ American hegemony in the Bank is eclipsed or ceded in regions where other major countries have particular interests. France's ex-colonies in West Africa are a good case in point. There the Bank acts within narrow limits set by the Elysée's advisor on African Affairs, occultly coordinating with the *Ministre de la Coopération* and French military intelligence.

comes through the Bank's staffing and professional norms. Not only are Americans greatly over-represented in the professional and managerial ranks but, at least as important since the beginning of the 1980s, is a second channel of influence—the conquest of managerial positions by economists, and the recruitment of economists, including some from the developing countries, predominantly from North American and British universities (virtually none from Japanese universities). This channel of influence is obscured by talking of 'professionalism' as a source of the Bank's autonomy, without also talking about the *content* of that professionalism and from which member state's intellectual culture it comes.

By examining such factors we can see how the Bank forms part of the external infrastructural power of the US state, even though it by no means bows to every demand of the US government. Whereas the Japanese state uses its strong *domestic* infrastructural power directly to leverage its external reach—especially in Southeast Asia and China—the US state, with much weaker domestic infrastructural power, relies upon its dominance of international organizations like the World Bank and the IMF to keep those organizations pursuing goals that augment its own external reach. The Bank's stance as honest broker allows it to insist on the acceptance of those goals more openly than the US could itself. The story of *The East Asian Miracle* shows how this process worked itself out in one particular case.

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Identity Politics and the Left

My lecture is about a surprisingly new subject.* We have become so used to terms like 'collective identity', 'identity groups', 'identity politics', or, for that matter 'ethnicity', that it is hard to remember how recently they have surfaced as part of the current vocabulary, or jargon, of political discourse. For instance, if you look at the International *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, which was published in 1968—that is to say written in the middle 1960s—you will find no entry under *identity* except one about psychosocial identity, by Erik Erikson, who was concerned chiefly with such things as the so-called 'identity crisis' of adolescents who are trying to discover what they are, and a general piece on voters' identification. And as for ethnicity, in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of the early 1970s it still occurs only as a rare word indicating 'heathendom and heathen superstition' and documented by quotations from the eighteenth century.

In short, we are dealing with terms and concepts which really come into use only in the 1960s. Their emergence is most easily followed in the USA, partly

because it has always been a society unusually interested in monitoring its social and psychological temperature, blood-pressure and other symptoms, and mainly because the most obvious form of identity politics—but not the only one—namely ethnicity, has always been central to American politics since it became a country of mass immigration from all parts of Europe. Roughly, the new ethnicity makes its first public appearance with Glazer and Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* in 1963 and becomes a militant programme with Michael Novak's *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* in 1972. The first, I don't have to tell you, was the work of a Jewish professor and an Irishman, now the senior Democratic senator for New York; the second came from a Catholic of Slovak origin. For the moment we need not bother too much about why all this happened in the 1960s, but let me remind you that—in the style-setting USA at least—this decade also saw the emergence of two other variants of identity politics: the modern (that is, post suffragist) women's movement and the gay movement.

I am not saying that before the 1960s nobody asked themselves questions about their public identity. In situations of uncertainty they sometimes did; for instance in the industrial belt of Lorraine in France, whose official language and nationality changed five times in a century, and whose rural life changed to an industrial, semi-urban one, while their frontiers were redrawn seven times in the past century and a half. No wonder people said: 'Berliners know they're Berliners, Parisians know they are Parisians, but who are we?' Or, to quote another interview, 'I come from Lorraine, my culture is German, my nationality is French, and I think in our provincial dialect'.¹ Actually, these things only led to genuine identity problems when people were prevented from having the multiple, combined, identities which are natural to most of us. Or, even more so, when they are detached 'from the past and all common cultural practices'.² However, until the 1960s these problems of uncertain identity were confined to special border zones of politics. They were not yet central.

They appear to have become much more central since the 1960s. Why? There are no doubt particular reasons in the politics and institutions of this or that country—for instance, in the peculiar procedures imposed on the USA by its Constitution—for example, the civil rights judgments of the 1950s, which were first applied to blacks and then extended to women, providing a model for other identity groups. It may follow, especially in countries where parties compete for votes, that constituting oneself into such an identity group may provide concrete political advantages: for instance, positive discrimination in favour of the members of such groups, quotas in jobs and so forth. This is also the case in the USA, but not only there. For instance, in India, where the government is committed to creating social equality, it may actually pay to classify yourself as low caste or belonging to an aboriginal tribal group, in order to enjoy the extra access to jobs guaranteed to such groups.

* This is the text of the Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust Lecture given at the Institute of Education, London on 2 May 1996.

¹ M. L. Pradelles de Laroui, 'Identity as a Complex Network', in C. Fried, ed., *Minorities, Community and Identity*, Berlin 1983, p. 79.

² *Ibid.* p. 91.

The Denial of Multiple Identity

But in my view the emergence of identity politics is a consequence of the extraordinarily rapid and profound upheavals and transformations of human society in the third quarter of this century, which I have tried to describe and to understand in the second part of my history of the 'Short Twentieth Century', *The Age of Extremes*. This is not my view alone. The American sociologist Daniel Bell, for instance, argued in 1975 that 'The breakup of the traditional authority structures and the previous affective social units—historically nation and class... make the ethnic attachment more salient'.³

In fact, we know that both the nation-state and the old class-based political parties and movements have been weakened as a result of these transformations. More than this, we have been living—we are living—through a gigantic 'cultural revolution', an 'extraordinary dissolution of traditional social norms, textures and values, which left so many inhabitants of the developed world orphaned and bereft.' If I may go on quoting myself, 'Never was the word "community" used more indiscriminately and emptily than in the decades when communities in the sociological sense become hard to find in real life'.⁴ Men and women look for groups to which they can belong, certainly and forever, in a world in which all else is moving and shifting, in which nothing else is certain. And they find it in an identity group. Hence the strange paradox, which the brilliant, and incidentally, Caribbean Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson has identified: people *choose* to belong to an identity group, but 'it is a choice predicated on the strongly held, intensely conceived belief that the individual has absolutely no choice but to belong to that specific group.'⁵ That it is a choice can sometimes be demonstrated. The number of Americans reporting themselves as 'American Indian' or 'Native American' almost quadrupled between 1960 and 1990, from about half a million to about two millions, which is far more than could be explained by normal demography; and incidentally, since 70 per cent of 'Native Americans' marry outside their race, exactly who is a 'Native American' ethnically, is far from clear.⁶

So what do we understand by this collective 'identity', this sentiment of belonging to a primary group, which is its basis? I draw your attention to four points.

First, collective identities are defined negatively; that is to say against others. 'We' recognize ourselves as 'us' because we are different from 'Them'. If there were no 'They' from whom we are different, we wouldn't have to ask ourselves who 'We' were. Without Outsiders there are no Insiders. In other words, collective identities are based not on what their members have in common—they may have very little in common except not being the 'Others'. Unionists and Nationalists in Belfast, or Serb,

³ Daniel Bell, 'Ethnicity and Social Change', in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge, Mass. 1975, p. 171.

⁴ E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*, London 1994, p. 428.

⁵ O. Patterson, 'Implications of Ethnic Identification' in Fried, ed., *Minorities: Community and Identity*, pp. 28–29.

⁶ Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, New York 1995, pp. 162, 109.

Croat and Muslim Bosnians, who would otherwise be indistinguishable—they speak the same language, have the same life styles, look and behave the same—insist on the one thing that divides them, which happens to be religion. Conversely, what gives unity as Palestinians to a mixed population of Muslims of various kinds, Roman and Greek Catholics, Greek Orthodox and others who might well—like their neighbours in Lebanon—fight each other under different circumstances? Simply that they are not the Israelis, as Israeli policy continually reminds them.

Of course, there are collectivities which are based on objective characteristics which their members have in common, including biological gender or such politically sensitive physical characteristics as skin-colour and so forth. However most collective identities are like shirts rather than skin, namely they are, in theory at least, optional, not inescapable. In spite of the current fashion for manipulating our bodies, it is still easier to put on another shirt than another arm. Most identity groups are not based on objective physical similarities or differences, although all of them would like to claim that they are 'natural' rather than socially constructed. Certainly all ethnic groups do.

Second, it follows that in real life identities, like garments, are interchangeable or wearable in combination rather than unique and, as it were, stuck to the body. For, of course, as every opinion pollster knows, no one has one and only one identity. Human beings cannot be described, even for bureaucratic purposes, except by a combination of many characteristics. But identity politics assumes that one among the many identities we all have is the one that determines, or at least dominates our politics: being a woman, if you are a feminist, being a Protestant if you are an Antrim Unionist, being a Catalan, if you are a Catalan nationalist, being homosexual if you are in the gay movement. And, of course, that you have to get rid of the others, because they are incompatible with the 'real' you. So David Selbourne, an all-purpose ideologue and general denouncer, firmly calls on 'The Jew in England' to 'cease to pretend to be English' and to recognize that his 'real' identity is as a Jew. This is both dangerous and absurd. There is no practical incompatibility unless an outside authority tells you that you cannot be both, or unless it is physically impossible to be both. If I wanted to be simultaneously and ecumenically a devout Catholic, a devout Jew, and a devout Buddhist why shouldn't I? The only reason which stops me physically is that the respective religious authorities might tell me I cannot combine them, or that it might be impossible to carry out all their rituals because some got in the way of others.

Usually people have no problem about combining identities, and this, of course, is the basis of general politics as distinct from sectional identity politics. Often people don't even bother to make the choice between identities, either because nobody asks them, or because it's too complicated. When inhabitants of the USA are asked to declare their ethnic origins, 54 per cent refuse or are unable to give an answer. In short, exclusive identity politics do not come naturally to people. It is more likely to be forced upon them from outside—in the way in which Serb, Croat and Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia who lived together, socialized and intermarried, have been forced to separate, or in less brutal ways.

The third thing to say is that identities, or their expression, are not fixed, even supposing you have opted for one of your many potential selves, the way Michael Portillo has opted for being British instead of Spanish. They shift around and can change, if need be more than once. For instance non-ethnic groups, all or most of whose members happen to be black or Jewish, may turn into consciously ethnic groups. This happened to the Southern Christian Baptist Church under Martin Luther King. The opposite is also possible, as when the Official IRA turned itself from a Fenian nationalist into a class organization, which is now the Workers' Party and part of the Irish Republic's government coalition.

The fourth and last thing to say about identity is that it depends on the context, which may change. We can all think of paid-up, card-carrying members of the gay community in the Oxbridge of the 1920s who, after the slump of 1929 and the rise of Hitler, shifted, as they liked to say, from Homintern to Comintern. Burgess and Blunt, as it were, transferred their gayness from the public to the private sphere. Or, consider the case of the Protestant German classical scholar, Pater, a professor of Classics in London, who suddenly discovered, after Hitler, that he had to emigrate, because, by Nazi standards, he was actually Jewish—a fact of which until that moment, he was unaware. However he had defined himself previously, he now had to find a different identity.

The Universalism of the Left

What has all this to do with the Left? Identity groups were certainly not central to the Left. Basically, the mass social and political movements of the Left, that is, those inspired by the American and French revolutions and socialism, were indeed coalitions or group alliances, but held together not by aims that were specific to the group, but by great, universal causes through which each group believed its particular aims could be realized: democracy, the Republic, socialism, communism or whatever. Our own Labour Party in its great days was both the party of a class and, among other things, of the minority nations and immigrant communities of mainland Britainians. It was all this, because it was a party of equality and social justice.

Let us not misunderstand its claim to be essentially class-based. The political labour and socialist movements were not, ever, anywhere, movements essentially confined to the proletariat in the strict Marxist sense. Except perhaps in Britain, they could not have become such vast movements as they did, because in the 1880s and 1890s, when mass labour and socialist parties suddenly appeared on the scene, like fields of bluebells in spring, the industrial working class in most countries was a fairly small minority, and in any case a lot of it remained outside socialist labour organization. Remember that by the time of World War I the social-democrats polled between 30 and 47 per cent of the electorate in countries like Denmark, Sweden and Finland, which were hardly industrialized, as well as in Germany. (The highest percentage of votes ever achieved by the Labour Party in this country, in 1951, was 48 per cent.) Furthermore, the socialist case for the centrality of the workers in their movement was not a sectional case. Trade unions pursued the sectional interests of wage-earners, but one of the reasons why the relations

between labour and socialist parties and the unions associated with them, were never without problems, was precisely that the aims of the movement were wider than those of the unions. The socialist argument was not just that most people were 'workers by hand or brain' but that the workers were the necessary historic agency for changing society. So, whoever you were, if you wanted the future, you would have to go with the workers' movement.

Conversely, when the labour movement became narrowed down to nothing but a pressure-group or a sectional movement of industrial workers, as in 1970s Britain, it lost both the capacity to be the potential centre of a general people's mobilization and the general hope of the future. Militant 'economist' trade unionism antagonized the people not directly involved in it to such an extent that it gave Thatcherite Toryism its most convincing argument—and the justification for turning the traditional 'one-nation' Tory Party into a force for waging militant class-war. What is more, this proletarian identity politics not only isolated the working class, but also split it by setting groups of workers against each other.

So what does identity politics have to do with the Left? Let me state firmly what should not need restating. The political project of the Left is universalist: it is for *all* human beings. However we interpret the words, it isn't liberty for shareholders or blacks, but for everybody. It isn't equality for all members of the Garrick Club or the handicapped, but for everybody. It is not fraternity only for old Etonians or gays, but for everybody. And identity politics is essentially not for everybody but for the members of a specific group only. This is perfectly evident in the case of ethnic or nationalist movements. Zionist Jewish nationalism, whether we sympathize with it or not, is exclusively about Jews, and hang—or rather bomb—the rest. All nationalisms are. The nationalist claim that they are for *everyone's* right to self-determination is bogus.

That is why the Left cannot *base* itself on identity politics. It has a wider agenda. For the Left, Ireland was, historically, one, but only one, out of the many exploited, oppressed and victimized sets of human beings for which it fought. For the IRA kind of nationalism, the Left was, and is, only one possible ally in the fight for its objectives in certain situations. In others it was ready to bid for the support of Hitler as some of its leaders did during World War II. And this applies to every group which makes identity politics its foundation, ethnic or otherwise.

Now the wider agenda of the Left does, of course, mean it supports many identity groups, at least some of the time, and they, in turn look to the Left. Indeed, some of these alliances are so old and so close that the Left is surprised when they come to an end, as people are surprised when marriages break up after a lifetime. In the USA it almost seems against nature that the 'ethnics'—that is, the groups of poor mass immigrants and their descendants—no longer vote almost automatically for the Democratic Party. It seems almost incredible that a black American could even consider standing for the Presidency of the USA as a Republican (I am thinking of Colin Powell). And yet, the common interest of Irish, Italian, Jewish and black Americans in the Democratic Party did not derive from their particular ethnicities, even though realistic politicians paid their

respects to these. What united them was the hunger for equality and social justice, and a programme believed capable of advancing both.

The Common Interest

But this is just what so many on the Left have forgotten, as they dive head first into the deep waters of identity politics. Since the 1970s there has been a tendency—an increasing tendency—to see the Left essentially as a coalition of minority groups and interests: of race, gender, sexual or other cultural preferences and lifestyles, even of economic minorities such as the old getting-your-hands-dirty, industrial working class have now become. This is understandable enough, but it is dangerous, not least because winning majorities is not the same as adding up minorities.

First, let me repeat: identity groups are about themselves, for themselves, and nobody else. A coalition of such groups that is not held together by a single common set of aims or values, has only an ad hoc unity, rather like states temporarily allied in war against a common enemy. They break up when they are no longer so held together. In any case, as identity groups, they are not committed to the Left as such, but only to get support for their aims wherever they can. We think of women's emancipation as a cause closely associated with the Left, as it has certainly been since the beginnings of socialism, even before Marx and Engels. And yet, historically, the British suffragist movement before 1914 was a movement of all three parties, and the first woman MP, as we know, was actually a Tory.⁷

Secondly, whatever their rhetoric, the actual *movements* and *organizations* of identity politics mobilize only minorities, at any rate before they acquire the power of coercion and law. National feeling may be universal, but, to the best of my knowledge, no secessionist nationalist party in democratic states has so far ever got the votes of the majority of its constituency (though the Québécois last autumn came close—but then their nationalists were careful not actually to demand complete secession in so many words). I do not say it cannot or will not happen—only that the safest way to get national independence by secession so far has been not to ask populations to vote for it until you already have it first by other means.

That, by the way, makes two pragmatic reasons to be against identity politics. Without such outside compulsion or pressure, under normal circumstances it hardly ever mobilizes more than a minority—even of the target group. Hence, attempts to form separate political women's parties have not been very effective ways of mobilizing the women's vote. The other reason is that forcing people to take on one, and only one, identity divides them from each other. It therefore isolates these minorities.

Consequently to commit a general movement to the specific demands of minority pressure groups, which are not necessarily even those of their constituencies, is to ask for trouble. This is much more obvious in the

⁷ Jihang Park, 'The British Suffrage Activists of 1913', *Past & Present*, no. 120, August 1988, pp. 156–7.

USA, where the backlash against positive discrimination in favour of particular minorities, and the excesses of multiculturalism, is now very powerful; but the problem exists here also.

Today both the Right and to the Left are saddled with identity politics. Unfortunately, the danger of disintegrating into a pure alliance of minorities is unusually great on the Left because the decline of the great universalist slogans of the Enlightenment, which were essentially slogans of the Left, leaves it without any obvious way of formulating a common interest across sectional boundaries. The only one of the so-called 'new social movements' which crosses all such boundaries is that of the ecologists. But, alas, its political appeal is limited and likely to remain so.

However, there is one form of identity politics which is actually comprehensive, inasmuch as it is based on a common appeal, at least within the confines of a single state: citizen nationalism. Seen in the global perspective this may be the opposite of a universal appeal, but seen in the perspective of the national state, which is where most of us still live, and are likely to go on living, it provides a common identity, or in Benedict Anderson's phrase, 'an imagined community' not the less real for being imagined. The Right, especially the Right in government, has always claimed to monopolize this and can usually still manipulate it. Even Thatcherism, the grave-digger of 'one-nation Toryism', did it. Even its ghostly and dying successor, Major's government, hopes to avoid electoral defeat by damning its opponents as unpatriotic.

Why then has it been so difficult for the Left, certainly for the Left in English-speaking countries, to see itself as the representative of the entire nation? (I am, of course, speaking of the nation as the community of all people in a country, not as an ethnic entity.) Why have they found it so difficult even to try? After all, the European Left began when a class, or a class alliance, the Third Estate in the French Estates General of 1789, decided to declare itself 'the nation' as against the minority of the ruling class, thus creating the very concept of the political 'nation'. After all, even Marx envisaged such a transformation in *The Communist Manifesto*.⁸ Indeed, one might go further. Todd Gitlin, one of the best observers of the American Left, has put it dramatically in his new book, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*: 'What is a Left if it is not, plausibly at least, the voice of the whole people? ... If there is no people, but only peoples, there is no Left.'⁹

The Muffled Voice of New Labour

And there have been times when the Left has not only wanted to be the nation, but has been accepted as representing the national interest, even by those who had no special sympathy for its aspirations: in the USA, when the Rooseveltian Democratic Party was politically hegemonic, in

⁸ 'Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must raise itself to be the national class, must constitute itself the nation, it is itself still national, though not in the bourgeois sense.' Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848, part II. The original (German) edition has 'the national class', the English translation of 1888 gives this as 'the leading class of the nation'.

⁹ Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, New York 1995, p. 165

Scandinavia since the early 1930s. More generally, at the end of World War II the Left, almost everywhere in Europe, represented the nation in the most literal sense, because it represented resistance to, and victory over, Hitler and his allies. Hence the remarkable marriage of patriotism and social transformation, which dominated European politics immediately after 1945. Not least in Britain, where 1945 was a plebiscite in favour of the Labour Party as the party best representing the nation against one-nation Toryism led by the most charismatic and victorious war-leader on the scene. This set the course for the next thirty-five years of the country's history. Much more recently, François Mitterrand, a politician without a natural commitment to the Left, chose leadership of the Socialist Party as the best platform for exercising the leadership of all French people.

One would have thought that today was another moment when the British Left could claim to speak for Britain—that is to say *all* the people—against a discredited, decrepit and demoralized regime. And yet, how rarely are the words 'the country', 'Great Britain', 'the nation', 'patriotism', even 'the people' heard in the pre-election rhetoric of those who hope to become the next government of the United Kingdom!

It has been suggested that this is because, unlike 1945 and 1964, 'neither the politician nor his public has anything but a modest belief in the capacity of government to do very much'.¹⁰ If that is why Labour speaks to and about the nation in so muffled a voice, it is trebly absurd. First, because if citizens really think that government can't do very much, why should they bother to vote for one lot rather than the other, or for that matter for any lot? Second, because government, that is to say the management of the state in the public interest, is indispensable and will remain so. Even the ideologues of the mad Right, who dream of replacing it by the universal sovereign market, need it to establish their utopia, or rather dystopia. And insofar as they succeed, as in much of the ex-socialist world, the backlash against the market brings back into politics those who want the state to return to social responsibility. In 1995, five years after abandoning their old state with joy and enthusiasm, two thirds of East Germans think that life and conditions in the old GDR were better than the 'negative descriptions and reports' in today's German media, and 70 per cent think 'the idea of socialism was good, but we had incompetent politicians'. And, most unanswerably, because in the past seventeen years we have lived under governments which believed that government has enormous power, which have used that power actually to change our country decisively for the worse, and which, in their dying days are still trying to do so, and to con us into the belief that what one government has done is irreversible by another. The state will not go away. It is the business of government to use it.

Government is not just about getting elected and then re-elected. This is a process which, in democratic politics, implies enormous quantities of lying in all its forms. Elections become contests in fiscal perjury. Unfortunately, politicians, who have as short a time-horizon as journalists, find

¹⁰ Hugo Young, 'No Waves in the Clear Blue Water', *The Guardian*, 23 April 1996, p. 13.

it hard to see politics as other than a permanent campaigning season. Yet there is something beyond. There lies what government does and must do. There is the future of the country. There are the hopes and fears of the people as a whole—not just 'the community', which is an ideological cop-out, or the sum-total of earners and spenders (the 'taxpayers' of political jargon), but the British people, the sort of collective which would be ready to cheer the victory of any British team in the World Cup, if it hadn't lost the hope that there might still be such a thing. For not the least symptom of the decline of Britain, with the decline of science, is the decline of British team sports.

It was Mrs Thatcher's strength, that she recognized this dimension of politics. She saw herself leading a people 'who thought we could no longer do the great things we once did'—I quote her words—'those who believed our decline was irreversible, that we could never again be what we were'.¹¹ She was not like other politicians, inasmuch as she recognized the need to offer hope and action to a puzzled and demoralized people. A false hope, perhaps, and certainly the wrong kind of action, but enough to let her sweep aside opposition within her party as well as outside, and change the country and destroy so much of it. The failure of her project is now manifest. Our decline as a nation has not been halted. As a people we are more troubled, more demoralized than in 1979, and we know it. Only those who alone can form the post-Tory government are themselves too demoralized and frightened by failure and defeat, to offer anything except the promise not to raise taxes. We may win the next general election that way and I hope we will, though the Tories will not fight the election campaign primarily on taxes, but on British Unionism, English nationalism, xenophobia and the Union Jack, and in doing so will catch us off balance. Will those who have elected us really believe we shall make much difference? And what will we do if they merely elect us, shrugging their shoulders as they do so? We will have created the New Labour Party. Will we make the same effort to restore and transform Britain? There is still time to answer these questions.

¹¹ Cited in Eric Hobsbawm, *Politics for a Rational Left*, Verso, London 1989, p. 54.

Cosmic Dancers on History's Stage? The Permanent Revolution in the Earth Sciences

Early on the morning of 1 February 1994, President Clinton, Vice-President Gore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the members of the National Security Council were awakened from their sleep by Pentagon officials.* A military surveillance satellite had detected the brilliant flash of a nuclear explosion over the western Pacific. There was intense concern that the strategic warheads aboard a Russian or Chinese missile submarine accidentally might have detonated. Military aircraft, however, failed to detect any unusual radiation in the indicated ocean sector, and defence intelligence experts soon concluded that the satellite had actually witnessed the explosion of an asteroid fragment, later estimated to have been the equivalent of a 200-kiloton nuclear blast. The President went back to bed.¹

Five months later, beginning on 16 July, hundreds of millions watched in awe as the Hubble space telescope transmitted images of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9's fiery death in the dense atmosphere of Jupiter. For nearly a week, the

plummeting trail of cometary fragments produced a succession of huge fireballs—equivalent to many million megatons of explosive energy—that left dark, temporary scars on the giant planet. Then, on 9 December 1994, an object comparable to one of Shoemaker-Levy 9's fragments—the asteroid 1994XM1—approached within 105,000 kilometres of the Earth, a record close call in the brief annals of monitoring so-called Near-Earth Objects (NEOs).²

These events made 1994 something of a watershed in public awareness of the Earth's vulnerability to comet and asteroid bombardment.³ Indeed, the spectators at Shoemaker-Levy 9's immolation were the first generation of humans to observe a major planetary impact since medieval monks recorded the collision of an asteroid with the moon, forming the crater Giordano Bruno, in 1178.⁴ Congress was sufficiently impressed to fast-track a major study of NEO-detection technology and a probe to the asteroid Eros—launched on 16 February.⁵ Meanwhile, the friends of Star Wars, including H-bomb father Edward Teller, lobbied for an orbital anti-asteroid defence of super-lasers and thermonuclear weapons. (Both of which, as Carl Sagan and others immediately pointed out, could be turned against Saddam Husseins on Earth as easily as NEOs).⁶

Beyond the predictable media hyperbole about exterminators from outer space—so reminiscent of 'comet hysteria' throughout human history—the events of 1994 were also an incomparable 'teach-in' on the Earth's citizenship in the solar system. February's giant fireball over the Pacific, July's fusillade against Jupiter, and December's breathtaking near-miss—were all cram sessions in the new Earth science being shaped by comparative planetology and the neo-catastrophist reinterpretation of the stratigraphic record. It is a lesson, of course, that many geologists, as well as geographers and historians, have great difficulty accepting. Even

² I am very grateful to Phil 'Pib' Burns (Northwestern University), Andrew P. Ingersoll (Cal Tech), and Herbert Shaw (USGS, Menlo Park) for their generous comments.

³ The mass of the boulder-sized fragment was estimated as 2,500 tons. It was the fourth multi-kiloton meteoric explosion detected by satellites since 1988. See I. Nemtchinov, T. Loseva, and A. Teterov, 'Impacts Into Oceans and Seas', in *Earth, Moon, and Planets*, no. 72, 1996, pp. 414–16. Also see Duncan Steel, *Regius Asteroids and Doomsday Comets*, New York 1995, pp. 203–5.

⁴ John Lewis, *Rain of Iron and Ice*, Reading, Mass. 1996, pp. 146–9, 'Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9', special section in *Science*, no. 267, 3 March 1995, pp. 1277–1323.

⁵ The traditional distinction between asteroids and comets has eroded with the recognition that many near-Earth asteroids are actually extinct (degaussed) comets. See David Jewett, 'From Comets to Asteroids: When Hairy Stars Go Bald', *Earth, Moon, and Planets*, no. 72, 1996, pp. 185–201.

⁶ This much discussed event was recorded in the Canterbury Chronicle and probably occurred on 25 June in the modern Gregorian calendar. This corresponds to the annual arrival of the Beta Taurid stream discussed later in this article. A prominent Muslim astronomer is convinced that the same meteoroid swarm produced an earlier impact on the Moon on 26 or 27 June 617 AD—an event described in the Qur'an as the 'splitting of the Moon'. J. Hartung, 'Was the Formation of a 20-km-Diameter Impact Crater on the Moon Observed on June 18, 1178?', *Meteoritics*, no. 11, 1976, p. 187; and Imad Ahmad, 'Did Muhammad Observe the Canterbury Meteoroid Swarm?', *Archaeoastronomy*, vol. xi, 1989–93, pp. 95–96.

⁷ See Steel, *Regius Asteroids*, ch. 12. Japan, meanwhile, is planning to land on an asteroid in 2002, while NASA hopes to bring back dust samples from Comet Wild-2 in 2003.

⁸ Ibid., and D. Morrison and E. Teller, 'The Impact Hazard: Issues for the Future', in T. Gehrels, ed., *Hazards Due to Comets and Asteroids*, Tucson 1994, p. 1140.

more than plate-tectonics, an 'open system' view of the Earth that recognizes the continuum between terrestrial and extra-terrestrial dynamics threatens the Victorian foundations of classical geology. To cite only one example, a single impact event can compress into minutes, even seconds, the equivalent of a million years or more of 'uniformitarian' process.

A Revolutionary Science?

But this is not a mere family feud. The 'golden age' of Cold War space exploration, now drawn to a close, has seeded the fields of philosophy with discoveries every bit as strange and revelatory as those of Magellan and Galileo—the names, appropriately enough, of our most recent planetary galleons. I must confess that as an ageing socialist, who spent the glory years of the Apollo program protesting the genocidal bombing of Indochina, it has taken me half a lifetime to warm to a scientific culture incubated within Cold War militarism and technological triumphalism. Yet it is also the contemporary home of luminous and, dare I say, revolutionary attempts to rethink the Earth and evolution within the new context of other planetary histories.

While postmodernism has defoliated the humanities and turned textualism into a prison-house of the soul, the natural sciences—which now include planetology, exobiology and biogeochemistry⁷—have once again, as in the time of Darwin, Wallace, Huxley and Marx, become the sites of extraordinary debates that resonate at the deepest levels of human culture. In this article, I explore how one debate—over the role of asteroid and comet impacts in mass-extinction events—has opened a door to a new vision of the Earth, and, even perhaps, of human history.

I begin with a polemical question: if postwar oceanography produced a revolution known as 'plate tectonics', what has the geological exploration of the solar system produced? This is a ploy to discuss the 'axiomatic' deep structure of traditional Earth science, surprisingly undisturbed by plate tectonics but mortally threatened by the post-Newtonian perspective of comparative planetology. A review of the debate over impact tectonics and 'coherent catastrophism' then introduces three case-studies: Herbert Shaw's *Craters, Cosmos, and Chronicles* (1994) is a disconcerting work—of Rabelaisian energy and squalor—which uses non-linear dynamical systems theory (a.k.a. chaos theory) to rethink Earth history as the 'coevolution' of mantle dynamics and asteroid bombardment.⁸ Stuart Ross Taylor's *Solar System Evolution: A New*

⁷ 'Biogeochemistry' studies the global transformation and movement of chemical substances whose cycles pass through the biosphere. 'Exobiology' is a comparative science, arising out of solar-system exploration, concerned with the conditions for life on Earth and other planets, solar and extra-solar.

⁸ It is important to lay my cards on the table from the very beginning. In what follows I understand *chaos theory* to entail three principal experimental results: 1) most deterministic motion—temporal change—in nature is sensitively dependent upon initial conditions; 2) the fine structure of most 'random' phenomena is actually some form of complex order; and 3) the phase transition from one ordered state to another is usually an 'avalanche' of determinate, but unpredictable events organized via feedback relationships. Chaos, however, reveals itself in strikingly different patterns as an infinite flowering of complexity (Mandelbrot sets), an eternal recurrence of alternating domains of order and disorder (meandering rivers); or as a dialectic of evolution and revolution (natural and human history).

Perspective (1992) provides a dignified funeral to 'Grand Unified Theories' in the tradition of Kant and Laplace. Taylor offers instead an intellectually breathtaking tour of a radically contingent and historical solar system, which leads, in turn, to a brief rendezvous with Vladimir Vernadsky, Stephen Jay Gould, and the fierce god Shiva. Finally, the cometary astronomers Victor Clube (Oxford) and William Napier (Edinburgh) have developed in the course of several dozen articles and books the case for a 'microstructure of terrestrial catastrophism' that includes devastating meteoroid storms every few thousand years. Where is the archaeological and geological evidence for the role of their 'Taurid Demons' in human history?

I. The Dragon and the Comet

'As dwellers on the land, we inhabit only about a fourth part of the surface; and that portion is almost exclusively a theatre of decay, and not of the reproduction'.
Charles Lyell⁹

Imagine a scientific expedition to a distant world that, after nearly 175 years of intensive exploration, utterly failed to discover that planet's most spectacular surface feature: a volcanic mountain chain, stunningly rifted along its spine and nearly 60,000 kilometres long. Given such an improbable case, we would likely consider the expedition's leaders, if not literally blind or mad, to be captive to some lethal epistemological conceit.

Yet the planet is the Earth; and the expedition, modern geology before 1956. The serpentine mountain chain is the Ocean Ridge system—or, as one famous geophysicist likes to call it, the 'Dragon'.¹⁰ A segment of it, the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, was discovered during efforts to lay trans-Atlantic cable in the 1870s, but it was not reconnoitred until the German Meteor expedition in 1925–27, whose soundings also revealed a prominent median rift. In the early 1930s, the British John Murray expedition confirmed a similar ridge and valley topography in the Indian Ocean.

Finally in 1956, after pioneering explorations of the submarine Pacific Basin, Bruce Heezen, Maurice Ewing, and Mary Tharp were able to demonstrate that the ridges-with-rifts—which they recognized coincided with the distribution of mid-ocean earthquake foci—constituted a continuous global belt, rising an average 2.8 kilometres above the ocean floor. Heezen's and Tharp's map, published in the *New York Times*, was the most dramatic addition to human knowledge of the Earth's rock-surface since Columbus. As Menard points out in his memoir of the period, it also 'provided a target that unified global exploration during the International Geophysical Year'—the Great Leap Forward of Earth science.¹¹

⁹ Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, vol. 1, London 1872 (12th ed.), p. 97.

¹⁰ William Kaula, 'The Earth as a Planet', in *Geophysical Monograph* 60, American Geophysical Union, Washington DC 1990, p. 18.

¹¹ See H W Menard, *The Ocean of Truth: A Personal History of Global Tectonics*, Princeton 1986, pp. 94–107. Unfortunately Mary Tharp's pioneering contribution is ignored in most later histories of the plate-tectonic revolution, including William Glen's *The Road to Jaramillo, Critical Years of the Revolution in Earth Science*, Stanford 1982 and H.B. Le Grand's *Drifting Continents and Shifting Theories*, Cambridge 1988.

The blinding conceit of traditional geology, of course, was its faith in the uniformity of continental and oceanic crustal processes. Until the 1950s, it was generally accepted that the bulk composition of the Earth's crust was horizontally homogenous, and that continental geology could be extrapolated to the ocean floors. The ocean crust, although putatively more ancient and devoid of relief, was conceived to be similar to the thick granitic crust of the continents. (Some even argued that large parts of the ocean floor consisted of Atlantis-like floundered continents). Geological exploration of the continental shelves—which indeed proved to be 'continental' in lithology—seemed to ratify the orthodox model. It was considered very unlikely that future exploration of deep ocean basins would unveil any unfamiliar tectonic features.

In the event, the frenetic Cold War efforts to map the ocean floors revealed a radically different reality. The ocean crust was basaltic not granitic; thin, not thick; and young, not Archaean. Instead of the predicted abyssal plain, marine geologists were shocked to discover startling families of new land forms: thousands of hillocks and sunken island mounts (guyots) as well as the globe-girdling immensity of the mid-ocean ridge belt.¹² They also found scores of inexplicably long escarpments—fracture zones—offsetting the ridge axes like the cross-ties of Neptune's railroad.

Novel structures, moreover, indicated novel processes, as it gradually became apparent that the rifted ridges were magma factories—'spreading centres'—producing new crust that was eventually swallowed—'subducted'—at the deep ocean-margin trenches. The great engines of crustal reproduction, in other words, were hidden under the seas.

The Conservative Revolution of Plate Tectonics

These fundamental revelations—produced by the shift of perspective from Lyell's 'theatre of decay' to Menard's 'ocean of truth'—made a new view of the Earth inevitable. Indeed, plate tectonics is now conventionally recognized as one of the classic, Kuhnian 'revolutions' in the history of science. Yet, precisely, what was 'revolutionary' about the new theory? To purloin a distinction from social history, was it truly a 'radical' revolution that rebuilt the Earth sciences on new foundations, or was it a 'conservative' revolution that saved the foundations while erecting a reformed structure of explanation?

Certainly plate tectonics swept away the last remnants of a late-Victorian geophysics that envisioned mountains as the crumpled expressions of internal cooling.¹³ In place of 'contraction theory'—and its alternative, thermal expansion—it offered a new view of the Earth as a restless chemical factory, where the ocean plates act as conveyor belts between the

¹² 'The most common landform on the face of the Earth was the previously unsuspected abyssal hill. Largely on the basis of Midpac and Capricorn echograms, I concluded in 1956 that 90 per cent of the Pacific sea floor is a hilly terrain and that the remaining 10 per cent is smooth only because hills have been buried by sediment or fluid lava flows.' Menard, *The Ocean of Truth*, p. 52.

¹³ For a brilliant intellectual history, see Mott Greene, *Geology in the Nineteenth Century: Changing Views of a Changing World*, Ithaca 1982.

mantle and crust. As the plunging plates are digested, they produce belches of magma that become volcanoes or the plutonic roots of mountains that eventually erode back into sea-floor sediment to be subducted all over again. Some of the revolution's leaders, like the great Canadian geophysicist J. Tuzo Wilson, even perceived a majestic mega-cycle, many geological epochs in duration, of oceans opening and closing to create or dismantle a Pangaeon supercontinent.¹⁴

Geology's old guard—especially the Soviets—bunkered down in their theoretical winter palaces, desperately clung to their geosynclines in face of the sweeping challenge of the new paradigm. But when the sound and fury had died away, it became clear that plate tectonics, for all of its demolition work on the superstructure, nonetheless had left intact the core doctrines underpinning Earth science. 'At the time, the new global tectonics appeared to be an extremely radical departure from classical geology. In retrospect, however, we can see that plate tectonics, as envisioned today, is fully consistent with the uniformitarian concepts inherited from Hutton and Lyell: the plates gradually split, slide, and suture, driven by forces intrinsic to the globe.'¹⁵

It is commonplace, of course, to equate foundational doctrine with Hutton and Lyell's uniformitarianism per se. I would argue, however, that Lyellian geology borrowed a decisive, if unspoken premise from Newton (the independence of Earth process from any astronomical context), and, in turn, passed on an all-important axiom to Darwin (evolution as a gradualistic reform of natural design). Each of these root principles can be represented as simple syllogisms, and together they constitute an axiomatic framework that was rarely questioned by geologists before the 1980s.

Lyell's vision of a uniformitarian Earth, whose surface is sculpted by the continuous action of small causes over great intervals of deep time, effectively dehistoricized natural history by excluding the unique events—'catastrophes'—that gave it narrative directionality. At the most fundamental level, moreover, Lyell asserted that geology was immune to astronomical chaos. This guarantee of 'cosmic security', which Clube and Napier call the 'lynch-pin' of modern science, was provided by Newton's celestial mechanics 'in which the Earth moves untroubled by cosmic forces'.¹⁶ Although the actual seventeenth-century author of the *Principia* was a fervent astrologer, the Newton deified by the Enlightenment was seen to have expelled from the heavens the apocalyptic Comet—symbol of extraterrestrial influence over Earth history—that had excited medieval imaginations.¹⁷

¹⁴ The Open University faculty has produced an outstanding introduction to contemporary geology in the light of plate tectonics: F. Brown, C. Hawkesworth and C. Wilson, eds, *Understanding the Earth: A New Synthesis*, Cambridge 1992.

¹⁵ Ursula Marvin, 'Impact and its Revolutionary Implications for Geology', in V. Sharpton and P. Ward, eds, *Global Catastrophes in Earth History: An Interdisciplinary Conference on Impacts, Volcanism, and Mass Mortality*, GSA Special Paper 247, Boulder 1990, p. 153.

¹⁶ See Stuart Ross Taylor, *Solar System Evolution. A New Perspective*, Cambridge 1992, p. 287; and Victor Clube and William Napier, *The Cosmic Winter*, Oxford 1990, pp. 96, 127.

¹⁷ For a fascinating discussion of Newton as astrologer, alchemist and catastrophist—including his views on cometary portents—see David Kubrin, 'Such an Impertinently Litigious Lady': Hooke's "Great Pretending" vs. Newton's *Principia* and Newton's and

Table 1

Earth as a Closed System (Old Axiomatic Framework)

-
- 1) *Newton's Guarantee* (he expelled chaos from the solar system)
 - a) The solar system is a precision orrery—a well-regulated mechanical system.
 - b) Earth's astronomical context, consequently, is unchanging except in the largest time-frames (earliest Earth, oldest Earth).
 - c) The Earth, therefore, can be studied as closed system.
 - 2) *Lyell's Principle* (he expelled catastrophe from Earth process)
 - a) Tectonic change is gradual over vast periods. Catastrophism, biblical or secular, is a misreading of the geological record
 - b) From a whole-Earth perspective, there is a steady state. Any cross-section of geological time reveals the same processes and land forms.
 - c) The present, therefore, is an analogue for the past.
 - 3) *Darwin's Corollary* (he expelled saltation from evolution)
 - a) Biological evolution follows Lyell's gradualistic pace of environmental evolution. 'Nature never progresses by leaps.'
 - b) Extinction and speciation, as a result, are uniformitarian in scale and rate. Natural selection fine-tunes adaptation.
 - c) Evolution, therefore, has a subtle, progressive logic.
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(Geology would later concede the role of planetesimal bombardment in the history of the early Earth, but this Hadean aeon, with its magma oceans and infernal visitors from space, was conceptually partitioned off from the rest of 'normal, closed-system' geological time. According to E.G. Nisbet, for example, 'in the Hadean, the Earth was in its formative stage, subject to external influence, while in the Archaean, it was evolving through its own internal constraints as a closed system.')

¹⁸

Lyell's anti-catastrophism, moreover, wound Darwin's evolutionary clock which, in turn, kept perfect Newtonian time.

Lyell is the source of Darwin's assumption that, viewed from the proper perspective, organic change, both within species and across species boundaries, moves at rates that may speed up here and there but are nonetheless gradual. Darwin also adopted Lyell's perspectivalism about evidence. If we think that geological and biological history are punctuated by discrete, dramatic, catastrophic changes, that is only because, with all our scratching and digging at the earth, we come up only with isolated pieces of data that we falsely aggregate into sudden large changes.

¹⁹

Nothing in plate tectonics directly challenged this closed-system model of gradual Earth evolution or the sacrosanct boundary between geology

¹⁷ (cont.)

Halley's 'Theory of Comets', in Norman Thrower, ed., *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: A Longer View of Newton and Halley*, Berkeley 1990

¹⁸ E.G. Nisbet, 'Of Clocks and Rocks—The Four Buns of the Earth', *Episodes*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1994), p. 326. In another context, however, Nisbet explains why Archaean geologists always have been uncomfortable with orthodox uniformitarianism. 'The fabric of interpretation of Archaean rocks', he emphasizes, 'must be built up again from first principles'. *The Young Earth. An Introduction to Archaean Geology*, London 1987, pp. 3–6.

¹⁹ David Depew and Bruce Weber, *Darwinism Evolving: Systems Dynamics and the Genealogy of Natural Selection*, Cambridge, Mass. 1995, p. 109. The authors stress the importance of Newtonian dynamics as the ontological ground under Lyell and Darwin's feet (see chapter four)

and astronomy. After 1960, to be sure, some anxiety was aroused by the growing evidence for episodic mass extinctions, as well as the discovery of an unexpected number of probable impact craters. But the ancient foundations of Earth science repelled all assaults until the 1980s. Then, appropriately enough, the blow came from outer space.

II. Coherent Catastrophism?

'Large-body impacts are not *ad hoc* *ex machina* explanations, they are inevitabilities.'

Walter Alvarez et al.²⁰

The shock of recognition, of course, was the discovery, near Gubbio, Italy, of an indelible extra-terrestrial signature—an improbable concentration of iridium—in a pencil-thin layer of clay corresponding to the Cretaceous/Tertiary (K/T) boundary, 65 million years ago. In their famous 1980 article interpreting the significance of the anomaly, physicist Luis Alvarez and his Berkeley-based team—including geologist son, Walter—boldly claimed to have found the smoking gun responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs.²¹ A subsequent cascade of corroborative research, including the identification of a world-wide pattern of iridium anomalies and the 1990 confirmation of the gigantic Chicxulub impact crater at the tip of the Yucatan Peninsula, established beyond reasonable doubt that the Earth had been struck by a bolide—comet nucleus or asteroid—at least ten kilometres in diameter and with an explosive power equivalent to five billion Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs. Its deadliness was redoubled by the coincidence that the vaporized target rock, which included thick layers of sulphur-rich anhydrite, produced an estimated 600 billion tons of sulphuric acid aerosol that fell as a hellish acid rain and temporarily turned the seas into a 'Strangelove ocean'.²²

Despite a long history of speculation about the catastrophic origin of the K/T extinction, the Alvarez-Berkeley group—as William Glen has emphasized—were the first to propose a genuinely 'testable', that is

²⁰ Walter Alvarez et al., 'Uniformitarianism and the Response of Earth Scientists to the Theory of Impact Crises', in V. Clube, ed., *Catastrophes and Evolution: Astronomical Foundations* (1988 BAAS Mason Meeting of Royal Astronomical Society at Oxford), Cambridge 1989, p. 14. The idea of an asteroidal or cometary origin for the K/T extinction, as opposed to the discovery of the decisive iridium anomaly itself, had been previously advanced by several researchers, including Victor Clube and William Napier in a remarkable paper, 'A Theory of Terrestrial Catastrophism', *Nature*, no. 282, 1979, p. 455.

²¹ L. Alvarez, W. Alvarez, F. Asaro, and H. Michel, 'Extraterrestrial Cause for the Cretaceous-Tertiary Extinction', *Science*, no. 208, June 1980. A Pemex geophysicist, Antonio Camargo, was the first to actually propose (in 1980) an impact origin for Chicxulub. It took nearly a decade, however, for other Mexican and US researchers to review the drill core samples and publish the evidence. For a comprehensive description, see Virgil Sharpton, et al., 'A Model of the Chicxulub Impact Basin Based on Evaluation of Geophysical Data, Well Logs and Drill Core Samples', *Geol. Soc. Am. Spec. Paper*, no. 307, 1996.

²² Richard Grieve, 'Impact: A Natural Hazard in Planetary Evolution', *Eposodes*, vol. 17, nos. 1-2 (1995), p. 14. The fortuitous chemical composition of the Chicxulub target rock may also explain why the two other Phanerozoic impacts, Manicouagan in Canada and Popigai in Siberia, which are comparable in magnitude, failed to produce extinction events on the same scale.

falsifiable, hypothesis.²³ In this sense, their iridium anomaly was comparable to the famous magnetic anomaly—the Vine-Marthew's hypothesis—that had cinched the case for plate-tectonics. Yet, just as Cold War oceanography had created the larger context of discovery that made plate-tectonics necessary, so too has the emergence of *comparative planetology* out of the space race radicalized the conceptual landscape of the K/T impact debate.

Indeed many geophysicists, at least, now talk about 'two parallel revolutions in the Earth sciences': one that has revealed the unexpected land forms of the ocean floor, while the other has 'changed the Moon and planets from astronomical into geological objects'.²⁴ Just as a whole-Earth geology was impossible before the discovery of the mid-ocean ridges and trenches, so, likewise, there was 'no way to develop a decent comprehension of the original and evolutionary history of a single, highly evolved, complex planet (Earth) by studying it in isolation from the class of objects of which it is but one member.'²⁵

The study of comparative planetary history, moreover, requires new understandings of the dynamic processes that organize planetary bodies, large and small, into a single complex system of interaction. Thus, satellite reconnaissance of the Earth, by deciphering the outlines of dozens of astroblemes in remote areas, has confirmed impact cratering as a fundamental geological process. According to one research team, the Earth has experienced at least 200,000 impacts equal to or larger than the famous Meteor Crater in Arizona since the beginning of the Devonian period, 408 million years ago.²⁶

The Earth as an Open System

A handful of astrophysicists and planetary geologists, to be sure, had long advocated the likely role of extra-terrestrial agents, comets and asteroids, in Phanerozoic Earth history. But they were voices crying in the wilderness until the 1980s, when mainstream geology finally had to confront powerful new evidence arising both from planetary exploration and the K/T debate. With the advantage of hindsight, it is now clear that an 'open-system' view of Earth history, struggling against the hegemony of the old axiomatic framework, has had to surmount four major scientific hurdles.

First, it was necessary to establish unequivocally the extra-terrestrial credentials of proposed impact craters on Earth. Grove Karl Gilbert, the founder of modern geomorphology, opened the debate with his research on Arizona's so-called 'Meteor Crater' in the early 1890s. Although

²³ William Glen, 'What the Impact/Volcanism/Mass-Extinction Debates Are About', in William Glen, ed., *The Mass-Extinction Debates: How Science Works in a Crisis*, Palo Alto 1994, pp. 7–12.

²⁴ James Head, 'Surfaces of the Terrestrial Planets', in J. Kelly Beatty and Andrew Chaikin, eds, *The New Solar System*, Cambridge, Mass 1990 (third edition), p. 77.

²⁵ Noel Hinners, 'The Golden Age of Solar-System Exploration', in Beatty and Chaikin, *The New Solar System*, p. 7.

²⁶ G. Neukum and B. Ivanov, 'Crater Size Distributions and Impact Probabilities on Earth from Lunar, Terrestrial-Planet, and Asteroid Cratering Data', in Gehrels, *Hazards Due to Comets*, p. 411.

Gilbert was the leading advocate of an impact, rather than volcanic, origin for the Moon's craters, he was baffled by the implausible geometry of the Arizona structure and the absence of any large meteoritic mass.²⁷ The physics of the impact—including the vaporization of the sixty-metre bolide—was finally clarified by the distinguished astrophysicist Forest Ray Moulton in 1929, but general acceptance of the impact hypothesis among geologists had to await Eugene Shoemaker's groundbreaking studies on shock metamorphism in the 1950s and early 1960s.²⁸ Later, satellite and space-shuttle photography revolutionized the search for impact footprints, while the K/T controversy dramatically raised the scientific stakes. Currently, 145 craters have been authenticated, ranging in diameter from a few hundred meters to 300 kilometres, including two mega-structures—Vredefort in South Africa and Sudbury in Ontario—that may be the terrestrial equivalents of lunar maria.²⁹

Second, it was essential to identify a plausible reservoir of potential Earth impacters in unstable orbits. Here the key event was the 1932 discovery of the first asteroid—1862 Apollo—in an orbit that intersected the Earth's. By the late 1940s a whole family of Earth-crossing asteroids—known as Apollos—had been identified, and some astronomers, like Fletcher Watson and Ralph Baldwin, were warning that major collisions might occur every million years or so.³⁰ Indeed, a previous Soviet expedition to Siberia in 1927 had confirmed the meteoroid origin of a huge 1908 air blast—now estimated to have been equivalent to a twenty-megaton hydrogen bomb—that levelled nearly 2,000 square kilometres of taiga in the remote watershed of the Tunguska River.³¹

Projectiles Guided by Chaos

Since Shoemaker, using wide-field Schmidt telescopes, launched the Planet-Crossing Asteroid Survey in 1972, the detection of NEOs has increased almost exponentially. Currently about 163 Earth-crossing asteroids—many of them extinct short-period comets—with diameters greater than one kilometre have been identified: less than 10 per cent of the estimated total population.³² Meanwhile, the Spacewatch program at Kitt Peak Observatory in Arizona has discovered a previously unsuspected 'Near Earth Asteroid Belt' composed of smaller NEOs, called Arjunos, in the range of tens of meters. At least fifty of these Tunguska-sized mini-asteroids pass between the Earth and the Moon *each day*.³³

²⁷ Kathleen Mark, *Meteorite Craters*, Tucson 1987, pp. 25–39.

²⁸ Astronomers, on the hand, had little difficulty accepting the impact hypothesis. By the 1940s, clear expositions of explosive cratering and matter-of-fact acknowledgements of the impact origin of the Arizona crater could be found in standard textbooks. See Steel, *Regius Asteroids*, p. 34. For the Shoemaker story, see David Levy, *The Quest for Comets*, New York 1994.

²⁹ R. Grieve and L. Pesonen, 'Terrestrial Impact Craters: Their Spatial and Temporal Distribution and Impacting Bodies', *Earth, Moon, and Planets*, no. 72, 1996, pp. 357–76.

³⁰ Steel, *Regius Asteroids*, pp. 18–22.

³¹ E. Krinov, *Great Meteorites*, Oxford 1966.

³² David Morrison, Clark Chapman and Paul Slavic, 'The Impact Hazard', in Beatty and Chalkin, *The New Solar System*, p. 61.

³³ T. Gehrels and R. Jedicke, 'The Population of Near-Earth Objects Discovered by Spacewatch', *Earth, Moon, and Planets*, no. 72, 1996, pp. 233–42; and Richard Kerr, 'Earth Gains a Retinue of Mini-Asteroids', *Science*, no. 258, 1992, p. 403.

Indeed NASA's NEO Survey Working Group recently estimated that there are between 500,000 and 1.5 million Arjunas in this near-Earth swarm.³⁴

It is now understood, moreover, that the asteroids and short-period comets of the inner solar system have very unpredictable orbits. Indeed chaos ultimately rules the entire solar system,³⁵ but on radically different time-scales for different classes of planetary objects. As Carlisle points out: 'Below a certain size, which depends both on the distance from the Sun and the proximity to other planets, an orbit is stable for no more than about ten million years before it decays into chaos, while a larger object in the same orbit may be stable for ten billion years.'³⁶ The orbits of NEOs, in particular, evolve so chaotically that 'they cannot be computed far enough into the future to determine reliably the risk of planetary impact'.³⁷ In addition to chaotic objects, moreover, the solar system also contains numerous chaotic zones, including the unstable '3:1 Kirkwood Gap' in resonance with Jupiter that some experts believe is a primary source for Earth-crossing asteroids and meteoroid debris.³⁸

Third, using the cratering records of the Moon and the other terrestrial planets as a comparative archive, it was necessary to establish some general parameters for impact size and frequency. Within geology, at least, a die-hard volcanist contingent rejected the asteroidal origin of the Moon's craters until the Apollo missions brought back incontrovertible 'ground truth' in the form of impact breccias, rather than basalts from the lunar highlands.³⁹ Although most planetary theorists had long regarded the Moon as a fossil mirror-image of the Earth's early impact history, direct exploration has provided measurements of the cratering rate since the end of the so-called 'late heavy bombardment' 3.8 billion years ago. NASA's Magellan probe, meanwhile, has produced similar estimates for

³⁴ 'The recent discovery that we exist in an asteroid swarm has enormous long term consequences, and its historical importance may someday be seen to rank with Columbus's discovery of the New World.' NASA Ames Space Science Division (on the Internet), NEO Survey Working Group's 1995 Report, sections IV and XI.

³⁵ 'Indeed, the development of chaos theory goes back to the prize question of the Swedish Academy in 1890: "How stable is our planetary system?" This question was finally answered by the French mathematician Henri Poincaré who resolved that even the three body problem is mathematically non-integratable and that even the planetary system has its history. He created the mathematics of bifurcation dynamics which has led to the contemporary concept of *deterministic chaos*.' Friedrich Cramer, 'The Two Modes of Time—of Planets and of Life', *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1995), p. 62.

³⁶ David Brex Carlisle, *Dinosaurs, Diamonds, and Things from Outer Space*, Palo Alto 1995, pp. 82–3.

³⁷ J. Tatum, D. Balam and G. Aikman, 'Astrometric Recovery and Follow-Up of Near-Earth Asteroids', *Planet. Space Sci.*, vol. 42, no. 8 (1994), p. 611.

³⁸ See 'Bard Gaps', chapter 8 in Ivaris Peterson, *Newton's Clock: Chaos in the Solar System*, New York 1993.

³⁹ Ursula Marvin and David Raup have criticized the indifference of mainstream geology to the stunning advances in meteoritics and planetology during the 1960s and 1970s. Claude Allegre, on the other hand, has rebuked Western geologists for ignoring—at least until the mid 1970s—the pioneering Soviet theory of 'progressive planetary accretion' that had been developed by Otto Schmidt and his students back in the 1940s. See Marvin, 'Impact and its Revolutionary Implications for Geology', pp. 152–5, David Raup, 'The Extinction Debates: A View from the Trenches', in Glen, *The Mass-Extinction Debates*, pp. 146–47, and Claude Allegre, *From Stone to Star: A View of Modern Geology*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 109–15. For an overview of the Soviet contribution, see A. Levin and S. Brush, *The Origin of the Solar System: Soviet Research 1925–1991*, New York 1995.

Venus, where the crater population, because of the relative youth of the planetary surface—approximately 500 million years old—exclusively consists of events within Phanerozoic time.⁴⁰

Planetologists originally had hoped to create a master impact-stratigraphy for the entire solar system. However, as planetary scientist Stuart Ross Taylor has pointed out, 'cratering fluxes appear to vary widely in different parts of the system, and there does not appear to be that prerequisite, a uniform solar-system-wide flux of impactors'.⁴¹ Still, extrapolating from the lunar and Venutian cases, and allowing for differences in gravity and atmospheric density, it has been possible to estimate terrestrial impact frequencies, which can, in turn, be double-checked against the age and size distribution of the 140-plus known craters. The pioneering calculations of the Shoemakers' are reproduced in Table 2.⁴² (Atmospheric bolide explosions, of course, are far more common. The current estimate is that a Hiroshima-size event occurs annually, while a megaton airburst is expected once or twice per century.)⁴³

Table 2

Estimated Production of Impact Craters on Earth During the Last 100 Million Years

Impacting object	Minimum crater diameter (km)						
	10	20	30	50	60	100	150
Asteroid	820	180	73	10	4.5	0.3	0
Comet	(270)	60	24	8	5.3	1.7	1
All objects	(1,090)	240	97	18	10	2	1

Finally, to put all the pieces in place, it was crucial to show a correlation between impact catastrophes and significant watersheds in the history of life. The K/T controversy, as Raup wryly points out, is 'box office' and has focused unprecedented interdisciplinary resources on the twin problems of mass extinction and bolide impacts.⁴⁴ One result was a dramatic renewal of interest in the approximate thirty-million-year cycle first identified by the eminent Scots geophysicist Arthur Holmes during the 1920s in the course of his research on large-scale sea-level fluctuations. In 1984 geologists tunnelling their way through data on the ages of impact craters unexpectedly ran into palaeontologists digging through extinction records. The two chronologies—cratering and mass extinctions—coincided (within a rather generous margin of error) around the

⁴⁰ See Henry Cooper, *The Evening Star: Venus Observed*, New York 1994, pp. 238–49.

⁴¹ Taylor, *Solar System Evolution*, p. 146.

⁴² Shoemaker, Eugene and Carolyn, 'The Collision of Solid Bodies', in Beatty and Chalkin, *The New Solar System*, p. 261. 'Comet nuclei tend to break up as they pass through the atmosphere, so the rate at which they produce craters smaller than 20 km may have been suppressed.' See also Neukum and Ivanov, 'Crater Size Distributions and Impact Probabilities', pp. 359–416.

⁴³ Morrison et al., 'The Impact Hazard', p. 63.

⁴⁴ David Raup, *Extinction, Bad Genes or Bad Luck?*, New York 1991. See also Philippe Claeys, 'When the Sky Fell on our Heads: Identification and Interpretation of Impact Products in the Sedimentary Record', in *US National Report to International Union of Geology and Geophysics* 1991–1994, supplement to *Reviews of Geophysics*, July 1995.

Holmsian wavelength of 26–33 million years.⁴⁵ Writing a few months later about this serendipitous convergence, Stephen Jay Gould proposed naming the cycle of impact and death after Shiva, the dancing Hindu god of destruction and rebirth.⁴⁶

Coherent Catastrophism

Although many geologists immediately disputed the correlation, others detected Holmsian periodicities in an astounding range of tectonic phenomena. Michael Rampino of the Godard Institute for Space Studies, for example, discerns a causal linkage between major impact events, flood-basalt volcanism, and extinctions. Using lunar analogies, he argues that the largest impacts can sufficiently disturb the crust and mantle to produce flood-basalt eruptions. Seismological models, as well as counterpart structures on Mercury and the Moon, suggest that the shear waves are most likely to be focused by the mantle upon the spot that is antipodal to the impact crater itself. Intriguingly, plate-tectonic reconstructions of the late Cretaceous indicate that the Deccan Traps—a vast flood basalt province in India—was directly opposite the Chicxulub crater.⁴⁷ Rampino's colleague Richard Stothers has further amplified this tectonic connection with a proposed synchronism between lunar cratering history—as a surrogate of Earth's—and the six major episodes of terrestrial mountain-building.⁴⁸

The increasingly sweeping claims of impact theorists—including the Rampino-Stother hypothesis that global tectonic upheavals are periodically driven by collisional energy—soon produced a partisan realignment within the K/T debate. The original battle-line between volcanists and impacters was supplanted by what the British astrophysicist William Napier has characterized as 'simple giant impact theory' versus 'coherent catastrophism'. Advocates of the former position, according to Napier, accept the Chicxulub impact but reject terrestrial catastrophism; the K/T event, in their view, was a unique exception to the otherwise general rule

⁴⁵ See Walter Alvarez and Richard Muller, 'Evidence from Crater Ages for Periodic Impacts on the Earth', *Nature*, no. 308, 1984, pp. 718–21; and David Raup and Jack Sepkoski, 'Periodicity of Extinctions in the Geologic Past', *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, no. 81, 1984, pp. 801–05. Critics, on the other hand, claim that the terrestrial cratering record has too many serious biases in age and size, resulting from erosional effects, to statistically support this periodicity. Grieve, in particular, thinks that the controversy will be more likely resolved by a more thorough study of the lunar cratering archive. See R.A.F. Grieve et al., 'Detecting a Periodic Signal in the Terrestrial Cratering Record', *Proc. Lunar. Plant. Sci. Conf.* 18th, 1988, pp. 375–82; and Alexander Deutsch and Urs Schärer, 'Dating Terrestrial Impact Events', *Meteoritics*, no. 29, 1994, p. 317.

⁴⁶ '[Shiva] holds in one hand the flame of destruction, in another (he has four in all) the damru, a drum that regulates the rhythm of the dance and symbolizes creation. He moves within a ring of fire—the cosmic cycle—maintained by an interaction of destruction and creation, beating out a rhythm as regular as any clockwork of cometary collisions.' Stephen Jay Gould, 'The Cosmic Dance of Shiva', *Natural History*, August 1984, p. 14.

⁴⁷ There is also a proposed correlation between the end Permian extinction, the Siberian Traps, and a fossil crater on the undense Falkland Plateau. See Michael Rampino, 'Impact Cratering and Flood Basalt Volcanism', *Nature*, no. 327, 1987, p. 468; and (with K. Caldeira), 'Major Episodes of Geologic Change: Correlations, Time Structure and Possible Causes', *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*, no. 114, 1993, pp. 215–27.

⁴⁸ Richard Stothers, 'Impacts and Tectonism in Earth and Moon History of the Past 3800 Million Years', *Earth, Moon and Planets*, no. 58, 1992, p. 151.

of uniformitarian processes.⁴⁹ The case for 'coherent catastrophism', on the other hand, was most forcefully argued by Harvard astrophysicist Ursula Marvin at a 1988 meeting on the K/T controversy. 'It is time to recognize', she told the Second Snowbird Conference, 'that bolide impact is a geologic process of major importance which by its very nature, demolishes uniformitarianism itself as the basic principle of geology'. 'Once the full implications of bolide impact are clearly understood', she added, 'geologists will realize that this violent force carries with it a far more revolutionary departure from classical geology than did plate tectonics'.⁵⁰

Unlike the plate-tectonicists of the 1960s, contemporary neo-catastrophists like Marvin accept the need to reconstruct the very foundations of Earth science. In their struggle against what Victor Clube calls the 'terrestrial chauvinism' of mainstream geology, they repeal Newton's guarantee of Earth's immunity from malign cosmic forces.⁵¹ Instead they propose a new view of the Earth (summarized in Table 3) as an 'open system'

Table 3

Earth as an Open System (New Axiomatic Framework)

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- 1) *Halley's Comet* (chaos theory reveals deep structures of singularity)
 - a) The solar system is fundamentally historical: a *bricolage* of unique events and assemblages, governed by deterministic chaos and open to galactic perturbations.
 - b) Earth's astronomical environment forms a dynamic continuum with geophysics and plate tectonics.
 - c) Only comparative planetology—a *historical science*—can establish the real specificity of solid Earth and biosphere evolution.
 - 2) *Cuvier's Revenge* (catastrophe organizes geology as history)
 - a) Process regimes—from earthquakes to supercontinent cycles—are (re)structured by unique events (catastrophes), periodicities actually unfold as non-linear histories.
 - b) Catastrophic and uniformitarian processes are interwoven at all temporal scales.
 - c) The past is only a partial analogue for the future.
 - 3) *Vernadsky's Legacy* (Gaia dances with Shiva)
 - a) The biosphere is adapted, via the evolution of biological cooperation, to chaotic crises of its planetary environment. Nature usually proceeds by leaps.
 - b) Mass extinction events are non-Darwinian factories of natural selection. At its extremes, evolution is a punctuated equilibrium between autonomous dynamics of environmental and genetic change.
 - c) Natural history, like planetary history, is characterized by its irreversible and unpredictable contingency.
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⁴⁹ William Napier, 'Terrestrial Catastrophism and Galactic Cycles', in Clube, *Catastrophes and Evolution*, pp. 135, 160.

⁵⁰ Marvin, 'Impact and its Revolutionary Implications for Geology', p. 153. It is interesting, of course, to speculate whether a middle-of-road position—that is, that earth history alternates between periods of catastrophism (acceleration of rates of change) and uniformitarianism (uniformity of rates of change)—can be made theoretically consistent. See the discussion in Richard Huggett, *Catastrophism. Systems of Earth History*, London 1990, pp. 194–200.

⁵¹ Victor Clube, 'The Catastrophic Role of Giant Comets', in Clube, *Catastrophes and Evolution*, p. 85.

integrated into the solar system's complex and unpredictable ecology of impacts and chemical exchanges. In an important sense, they are finally completing the Copernican revolution.

The Cosmic Carousel

The new axiomatic framework, not surprisingly, has been most easily embraced by astronomers and planetologists like Marvin at Harvard, Clube and Napier at Oxford, Rampino and Stothers at the Goddard Institute, the Shoemakers at Lowell Observatory, R.A.F. Grieve at the Geological Survey of Canada, Jay Melosh and John Lewis at the University of Arizona, and Stuart Ross Taylor and Duncan Steel in Australia. Within palaeontology and evolutionary biology, its major supporters—like David Raup and John Sepkoski at the University of Chicago—tend to be allies of the 'punctuated equilibrium' camp of Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldridge. Intriguingly, the most radical advocates of neo-catastrophism within academic geology are Asian, like Kenneth Hsu in China (and Switzerland) and Mineo Kumazawa at Nagoya University; a fact that may be related to the cultural specificity of the uniformitarian tradition. Chinese philosophical traditions, in particular, privilege the role of astronomical events in Earth history. Thus Chinese geologists embraced the Alvarez hypothesis with alacrity, and immediately launched a remarkable nationwide hunt for extraterrestrial isotopic anomalies at other extinction horizons—later confirmed at the base of the Cambrian and the end of the Permian. They also have been the boldest in reconceptualizing stratigraphic boundaries: 'it is obvious that the subdivision of the major stages of geological history should not be dependent solely on the Earth's evolution, but chiefly on the occurrence of astrogeological events'.⁵²

Aside from their united front on the impact origin of the K/T extinction, many of the neo-catastrophists also have organized their research around the same hypothetical game of planetary billiards. They conjecture that the Shiva cycle of impacts is driven by a galactic tide, probably the Sun's vertical oscillation in the plane of the Milky Way Galaxy.⁵³ Each time that the solar system, like a carousel horse, rises or falls through the galactic plane, the gravitational attraction of stars or, more rarely, interstellar molecular clouds—the most massive objects in the galaxy—loosen giant comets from the Oort Cloud. As these comets eventually arrive within the planetary belt, Jupiter's gravity eventually ejects most of them out of the solar system, but a few are shunted into short-period orbits close to the Sun.⁵⁴ Solar energy disintegrates the cores of the giant comets, which become long trails of smaller comets, asteroid fragments and zodiacal dust. In Earth-crossing orbits, they produce regular

⁵² Duo-yi Xu et al., *Astrogeological Events in China*, New York 1989, p. 221.

⁵³ Napier however argues that the thirty-million-year cycle is actually a harmonic artefact of a more fundamental fifteen-million-year periodicity. See Napier, 'Terrestrial Catastrophism and Galactic Cycles', p. 141.

⁵⁴ For a recent review of the periodic versus stochastic galactic forces acting upon the Oort comet cloud, see John Matese et al., 'Periodic Modulation of the Oort Cloud Comet Flux by the Adiabatically Changing Galactic Tide', *Icarus*, no. 116, 1995, pp. 255–68.

episodes of relatively intense bombardment and extinction, as well as meteor-induced changes in climatic regimes.³⁵

The evolution of the Earth, in other words, is galactically controlled through a Rube-Goldberg-like chain of gravitational accidents: a hypothesis that is as exhilarating to most astronomers as it is preposterous to most geologists. It remains, however, simply a grand hypothesis, lacking proof in all the crucial details. It is not yet the holy grail of 'coherent catastrophism' that Clube, Napier, Steel and others so ardently seek. Indeed, there has been much confusion about whether a new synthesis, as theoretically unified and testable as plate tectonics, was even possible. Then, in 1994, Herbert Shaw published his magnum opus: a treatise of nearly 700 pages—*Craters, Cosmos, and Chronicles*—which is bravely subtitled 'A New Theory of Earth'.

III. Chaotic Couplings

'Meteoroid impacts are not simply cosmic events independently imposed on Earth. They are events that have evolved *with* the Earth.'

Herbert Shaw³⁶

The impact debate is sometimes portrayed as the resurrection of the epic nineteenth-century struggle between uniformitarianism and catastrophism. Palaeontologist David Raup, for one, sees the ghosts of Cuvier ('father of catastrophe') and Lyell ('father of gradualism') hovering over the K/T battlefield.³⁷ Yet, as I have tried to show, these traditional labels inadequately capture the even deeper epistemic conflict between closed and open-system views of the Earth's interaction with a stable—or chaotic—solar system. The biggest step for the Earth sciences has not been the admission of an occasional catastrophe or two, but rather the acceptance that terrestrial events, at a variety of time-scales, form a meaningful continuum with extra-terrestrial processes.

Where most geologists fear to tread, of course, has long been familiar territory to astrophysicists and geophysicists. Space plasma physics, for example, studies a single Sun-Earth system: 'a chain of intimately coupled regions extending from the Sun's surface to Earth—the solar photosphere, the solar corona, the solar wind, Earth's magnetosphere, Earth's ionosphere, and Earth's atmosphere.'³⁸ Herbert Shaw, a research geologist with the USGS in Menlo Park, has boldly extended these couplings into a limitless chain of 'resonances' linking terrestrial microcosms to galactic macrocosms. Although the crux of Shaw's theory concerns

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 138–157; also Steel, *Reges Asteroids*, pp. 97–103. In addition, see the special issue, 'Dynamics and Evolution of Minor Bodies with Galactic and Geological Implications', *Celestial Mechanics and Dynamical Astronomy*, vol. 54, nos. 1–3 (1992). R. Muller argues that changes in meteor flux are responsible for the 100,000-year glaciation cycle that has dominated the Quaternary period. 'Extraterrestrial Accretion and Glacial Cycles', *New Developments Regarding the K/T Event and Other Catastrophes in Earth History*, Houston 1994, pp. 85–6.

³⁶ Herbert Shaw, *Craters, Cosmos, and Chronicles: A New Theory of the Earth*, Palo Alto 1984, p. xxvii.

³⁷ David Raup, *The Nemesis Affair*, New York 1986.

³⁸ Donald Williams, 'Space Plasma Physics', in *Geophysical Monographs* 60, p. 21.

complex feedbacks between the Earth's thermodynamic regime—core-mantle system—and its impact history, his concept of 'Earth system', like Hegel's concept of History, is dialectically all-encompassing.

It seems necessary to conclude that we are faced with a revolution in concepts of natural history. This revolution is more profound than suggested by correlations of volcanic events with meteoroid impact events. The most mind-bending implication is the possibility that synchronicity may extend between phenomena as widely separated in space and time as biochemical genetics and intergalactic dynamics. Every type and scale of scientific discipline has been thrown together in ways that violate (or enlighten) long established traditions of autonomy.⁵⁹

Shaw is a tireless missionary within the Earth sciences for the viewpoint of non-linear dynamical systems theory, which, as we shall see, he has used to revise the Alvarez-Berkeley hypothesis in a startling new direction. Like other scientists, bored with orthodoxy who lived in the Bay Area during the intellectually restless 1970s, he first saw the Burning Bush of Chaos on the road to Santa Cruz. In his prologue he fondly recalls UC Santa Cruz's legendary 'Dynamical Systems Collective' and their pioneering analyses of dripping faucets and other chaotic phenomena. As a rheologist with an extensive background in magma research, a notoriously non-linear subject, who became fascinated during the 1970s with the role of tidal deformations in the thermal history of the Earth, he was predisposed to relish the 'conceptual resonances'—especially between astrophysics and geophysics—that chaos theory seemed to reveal.⁶⁰

In common with other champions of non-linearity, Herbert Shaw sometimes seems to speak in fractal tongues. *Craters, Cosmos, and Chronicles* is a daunting rainforest of tightly coiled allusion, luxuriant digression and dense polymathy. Yet it is also infused with the almost drunken energy of theory working at the edge. Two things, I suspect, will arbitrate the reception of this strange but visionary work, even amongst hardcore neocatastrophists. First, it will be fascinating to see whether other geophysicists are willing to endorse his 'Celestial Reference Frame' theory of ballistic guidance and bolide/mantle-anomaly coupling—to be discussed in a moment—as a viable hypothesis. Secondly, there is the larger question of chaos theory's credibility, under tough logical interrogation, as a subsuming world-view and revolutionary epistemology.

Critics may be able to treat these two issues separately, but for Shaw himself the validity of his impact scenario is obviously indissociable from his radical anti-reductionism. Consider, for example, his provocative definitions of 'causality' and 'periodicity'. Shaw rejects linear cause and effect—for example, 'planetary billiard games'—in favour of a structural causality arising from 'strange loops' of complex feedback. 'The universe of experience', he adds, 'is ruled by processes that rarely, and in detail

⁵⁹ Herbert Shaw, *Terrestrial-Cosmological Correlations in Evolutionary Processes*, USGS, Open-File Report 88-43, 1988, p. 5.

⁶⁰ Shaw, *Craters, Cosmos and Chronicles*, pp. xxvii–xxxvii. Shaw used the Jovian example—where huge tidal forces produce cataclysmic thermal convection on major moons—to make the subversive argument that 'many significant entries to Earth's mass energy budget in addition to solar energy come from the outside'. See 'The Periodic Structure of the Natural Record, and Nonlinear Dynamics', *Eos*, vol. 68, no. 30 (1987), p. 1634.

never, boil down to direct proportional parts—parts that can simply be summed to describe the net effects of those processes.⁶¹

Causality, Complex and Tangled

The statement, 'impacts cause extinctions', therefore, is nothing but careless shorthand. No single subsystem, however significant, can be causative by itself, since 'behaviour exists only by virtue of the non-linear synchronization of the whole'. Moreover, 'because igneous, solar system and galactic periodicities are founded in common non-linear phenomena, the separation into endogenous and exogenous effects is lost as a basis for classifying mechanisms.' 'To a non-linear dynamicist', Shaw adds, 'the fact that the solar system is imbedded in the galactic system indicates that the former is a special substructure that exists because of resonant interactions with the system as a whole'. ('Resonance', by the way, is more than a good vibration; in Shaw's writing it frequently has the same connotation—of multiple, entangled causality—as 'overdetermination' in Freud's theory of dreams or 'structural causality' in Althusser's theory of modes of production.) Therefore the rigorously correct formulation—although try explaining this to a dinosaur!—is that impacts and extinctions are 'coupled oscillators'.⁶²

Similarly, because there are no perfectly independent processes, there are no perfect Newtonian clocks. Abstract, linearly calibrated time—like its negation, pure stochasticity—is an illusion, reinforced by our own species-specific dimensional scaling and self-referentiality. 'Only the behaviour of the natural system itself (its properties of non-linear recursion under specified conditions of observation) identifies the contextual meaning of time'.⁶³ Like the geological column, non-linear time is a fractal order of periodic but non-uniform punctuation (for instance, Mandelbrot's 'devil's staircase'), typically scaled at irrational-number ('quasi-periodic') frequencies. As a result, it has intervals of both sharp and fuzzy calibration.⁶⁴

In his own reading of Shaw, the British geographer and historian of catastrophism, Richard Huggett, sees a 'fundamental question' at stake: 'how periodicity develops in systems replete with rate-dependent interactions and complex forms of feedback with other processes. A tentative answer is that fundamental periodicities in any system arise from the variability of non-linear coupling, that they emerge as sets of interacting resonances in the course of an irreversible evolution.'⁶⁵

The 'interacting resonances' at the core of Shaw's reformulation of the Impact Hypothesis ally the evolution of the Earth's interior with the

⁶¹ Shaw, *Craters, Cosmos, and Chronicles*, p. 27.

⁶² Shaw, 'The Periodic Structure', pp. 1653, 1665. Shaw thus finds much of the controversy over statistical testing of the Holmesian periodicity as almost beside the point.

⁶³ Shaw, *Craters, Cosmos, and Chronicles*, p. 20; and his 'The Liturgy of Science: Chaos, Number, and the Meaning of Evolution', in Glen, *The Mass-Extinction Debates*, p. 171.

⁶⁴ Shaw emphasizes 'that our knowledge of nonlinear periodicity owes much to the pioneering studies by V.I. Arnol'd, B.V. Chirikov, and others in the Soviet Union' 'The Periodic Structure', p. 1665.

⁶⁵ Huggett, *Catastrophism*, p. 198. He is referring to 'The Periodic Structure'.

configuration of near-Earth orbits intermittently occupied by bolide impacters. He brazenly wagers the family farm on the proposition that the major impact events over the last half-billion years have not been random, but ordered; not only in their temporal pattern—as many neo-catastrophists believe—but also in their spatial pattern. Astonishingly, he finds that most known impacts cluster around three ‘Phanerozoic cratering nodes’ (PCNs) connected by a single great circle (or ‘Phanerozoic swathe’). The PCNs, Shaw claims, are locked in a stable angular relationship with the Earth’s axis of rotation that is more fundamental and invariant than the ‘hot spot reference frame’ normally used in palaeogeographical reconstructions. He consequently proposes a ‘celestial reference frame’ (CRF), created by the celestial-sphere projection of the Phanerozoic cratering pattern, as a new framework for interpreting the surface history of the Earth.⁶⁶

But what established this remarkable cratering pattern in the first place? Again, Shaw’s answer is breathtaking: the Earth has a ‘meridional geodetic keel’ (MGK)—a longitudinal mass anomaly frozen deep in the mantle (and corresponding to observed primary-wave seismic anomalies)—that is the legacy of the Moon’s violent birth 4.4 billion years ago. Through the MGK, the Earth’s past controls its future. When ‘chaotic crises’—including the thirty-million-year galactic tide—swell the population of near-Earth objects (NEOs), the gravitational resonances of the MGK, perhaps assisted by the Moon, recruit some as temporary natural satellites of the Earth. As their orbits decay, the MGK then provides ‘flight control’ that guides the bolides through the CRF to ground zero within the PCN, where their impact reinforces the ancient patterning of the MGK. (A virtuoso example, to be sure, of circular positive feedback!)⁶⁷

Table 4 rudely converts Shaw’s ‘multifractal’ argumentation into a linear summary or cartoon. But *Craters, Cosmos, and Chronicles* digresses so frequently into a teach-in on non-linear dynamical systems theory that it sometimes fails to adequately spotlight or elaborate some of its most daring theses. The most important of these, I think, is the primacy that Shaw assigns to impact cratering as a geological agency. For most geologists, of course, it has been difficult enough to accept extra-terrestrial bombardment as an ongoing Earth process. But Shaw goes much further.

⁶⁶ Grieve and Shoemaker also conclude that the ‘spatial distribution of known craters is not random’, but in their eyes this is simply a trivial consequence of differential rates of erosion. ‘Very few known craters occur outside cratonic areas, which, with their relatively low levels of tectonic and erosional activity, are the most suitable surfaces for the acquisition and preservation of craters in the terrestrial geological environment’. See R A E. Grieve and B. Shoemaker, ‘The Record of Past Impacts on Earth’, in Gehrels, *Hazards Due to Comets*, p. 419.

⁶⁷ In a recent article Michael Rampino and Tyler Volk analyse a linear swathe of eight Palaeozoic craters across Kansas, Missouri and Illinois which they believe were probably produced by objects in natural Earth orbits. They note that this offers support for ‘Shaw’s thesis that non-linear resonance effects in the inner Solar System might make capture in Earth orbit more probable’. ‘Multiple Impact Event in the Palaeozoic: Collision with a String of Comets or Asteroids?’, *Geophysical Research Letters*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1996), pp. 49–52.

Table 4

A Linear Summary of Shaw's Non-Linear Theory of Impact Tectonism

- 1) Collision between Earth and Mars-sized proto-planet (4.4 billion ybp) creates Moon; leaves immense scar basin/*magma ocean*, probably ancestral Pacific Basin (pp. 110–12, 271–7).
- 2) Secondary bombardment by orbiting debris reinforces *longitudinal mass anomaly* in deep mantle that evolves from root system of magma ocean (pp. 110–12).
- 3) Thus MGK—which Shaw identifies with the present-day seismic (fast P-wave) anomaly around the Pacific Ocean—exerts gravitational influence (spin-orbit resonance) on temporary natural satellites of the Earth (pp. 271–80).
- 4) A *geocentric* (orbital) *reservoir* intermittently fills with small (10 km or less) asteroids and comet debris; *chaotic crises*—perhaps caused by the periodic galactic tide—produce cascade of impacts on Earth (pp. 3, 11–12).
- 5) The MGK exercises *flight control* over impacters, whose trajectories, therefore, are not random walks, but 'focused barrages' governed by an invariant *celestial reference frame* (CRF) locked to the long-term motion of the mean axis of rotation (pp. 165–202, 559).
- 6) Impacts, therefore, are not random but *patterned in space and time*. Where swatches of bombardment intersect, *planetary cratering nodes* (PCN) can be identified. Shaw also accepts the non-linear (devil's staircase) version of Holmesian 30-million-year cycle for the peak power of the impacts (pp. 30–41).
- 7) Thus, there is a circular positive feedback (MGK–CRF–PCN–MGK...) between the Earth's internal mass anomalies and the history of impacts. Shaw refers to this as a kind of 'orbital ballistic telegraphy' or 'non-linear laser printer' (pp. 3, 10, 35).
- 8) Patterned impacts make an important contribution to the Earth's *energy budget*; there is persistent feedback between the cumulative energy of impacts and net plate-tectonic motion (pp. 245–59).
- 9) MGK also guides plate motion; principal subduction zones correlate crudely with deep mass anomalies. In a non-trivial sense, biostratigraphy is ultimately structured by the solar system (pp. 277–83, 312).
- 10) This system is specific to Earth: other planets have not 'experienced the same degree of coupling between their internal and external non-linear-dynamical resonance states versus the chaotic evolution of the solar system' (p. 305).

Warmed by Bombardment

One of the major loose ends in current geophysical theory, for example, is resolving the ultimate nature of the Earth's thermal regime. Many theorists now doubt that core heat loss, by itself, is sufficient to produce the mantle plumes that supposedly blow-torch rifts in continents and drive plate motion. At the same time, there is little agreement about the quantitative contribution of radiogenic heating in the lithosphere. At worst, geophysicists see a mysterious discrepancy. In Shaw's view, however, this is an unnecessary conundrum arising out of the underestimation of the cumulative input of energy from impacts. Correctly calculated, impacts

and other external energy sources, including tidal friction, balance the books.⁶⁸

He estimates, for instance, that the extra-terrestrial donation to the Earth's energy budget over the last billion years has been at least 10^{33} ergs—the equivalent of one billion earthquakes as powerful as the largest historical quake—in Chile in 1960, of 9.5 magnitude.⁶⁹ Whereas most geologists, and even some neo-catastrophists, seem to visualize impact cratering as a separate and independent process from plate tectonics, Shaw asserts that they have been indivisibly coupled since the formation of the first cratonic proto-continents in the Early Archean era. He clearly implies that the plate-tectonic 'revolution' will only be completed when it integrates the role of impacts and other external energy sources.⁷⁰

From one daring hypothesis to another, *Craters, Cosmos, and Chronicles* tickles the geological imagination with new and unorthodox interpretations of Earth history in the light of its cosmic context. In a strictly formal sense, it provides an anticipatory model of the kinds of complex feedback and resonance relationships that any comprehensive open-system theory would have to explain. Yet Shaw's extreme anti-reductionism also acts as a fail-safe mechanism against the potential testing—that is to say, falsification—of his individual hypotheses. For example, when discussing the hypothetical correspondence between cratering patterns, deep mantle anomalies, and geomagnetism, Shaw concludes that they form a 'global system of multiple time-delayed coupled oscillators'.⁷¹

'Time-delayed coupled oscillators?' What Shaw actually seems to be saying is that while there is no straightforward relationship in time between these phenomena, they can be correlated at some deeper 'time-delayed' or fractal level. In other papers, he evokes 'rhythmic patterns of orchestral proportions'.⁷² This, of course, follows almost tautologically from Shaw's premise of a holistic Earth-cosmos system where phenomena are time-connected by definition rather than by empirical linkages. After all, what can't be coupled in oscillation at some 'time delay'? Indeed, Shaw calmly acknowledges that 'this is not good news from the standpoint of sorting out specific causes and effects, or from the standpoint of assigning unique frequencies to specific mechanisms'.⁷³ In effect, his resonances, in their 'indifferent diversity', threaten to dissipate themselves in the same 'bad infinity' that Hegel cautioned was the graveyard of all non-dialectical Absolutes (read, global systems).⁷⁴

⁶⁸ See Shaw, *Craters, Cosmos, and Chronicles*, pp. 245–59.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 258. (The conversion of earthquake energy is my own.)

⁷⁰ 'The central thesis of my work holds that a system of geodynamic feedback, between the cumulative energy of impacts and the net motions of plate tectonics and continental drift, has persisted throughout geologic history.' Ibid. p. 35

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 219.

⁷² Shaw, *Terrrestrial-Cosmological Correlations in Evolutionary Processes*, p. 2.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 231.

⁷⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford 1977, pp. 7–9. Responding to a draft of this article, Shaw answers my criticism by pointing out that 'unique frequencies [read linear cause-and-effect] are illusions in natural phenomena—rather there are multifractal spectra of very wide range that have power peaks in certain frequency ranges in different places and/or mechanisms, and at different times'.

IV. Elephants on Mars

'Do Shiva and Gaia represent a coupled and coevolved system—the stability of one somehow dependent on disturbances caused by the other?'

Michael Rampino⁷⁵

Last December, after two decades of exasperating delay and disaster, the Galileo spacecraft finally reached its rendezvous with Jupiter and launched a probe into the hydrogen-and-ammonia maelstrom of the Jovian atmosphere. In the hour before NASA's artificial meteor was incinerated, it transmitted data 'so offbeat that researchers scrambled to see if their instruments had run amock'.⁷⁶ Most of the predicted atmospheric water was missing: a shortfall that invalidates existing models of Jupiter's energy budget and chemistry. The *New Scientist* predicted that 'planetary scientists may now have to completely rethink their theories of the giant planet's structure'.⁷⁷

This was no more than business as usual. Since 1959 when the USSR's Luna 3 documented the absence of maria on the Moon's farside, surprise has been the standard ration of planetary reconnaissance. Indeed the geological survey of the solar system has revealed new realities as completely unexpected as those discovered by cold war oceanography during the 1950s. As one team of researchers pointed out, 'the sense of novelty would probably not have been greater if we had explored a different solar system'.⁷⁸ In essence, theory has been unable to predict planetary composition or dynamics in advance of exploration. The solar system is distinguished by the conspicuous absence of 'normal planets'. Each instead is an eccentric individual with its own unique chemical and tectonic identity. Moreover, the same rule applies to miniature as well as major worlds, since 'every satellite has turned out to differ in some significant feature from its neighbour'. Singularity, in other words, seems to have a fractal distribution across scales.⁷⁹

The distinguished Australian cosmochemist Stuart Ross Taylor has drawn important epistemological conclusions from this planetary exceptionalism. 'The complexity of the solar system', he argues, 'is not in accord with theories that start from some simple initial condition.' In his view, planetary diversity confounds the classical Kant-Laplacean project of discovering 'some uniform principles, analogous to the Periodic Table or Darwinian evolution, from which one might construct clones of our solar system'. In particular he disputes elegant, 'top-down' theories of the system's origin like the 'equilibrium condensation

⁷⁵ 'Gaia Versus Shiva: Cosmic Effects on the Long-Term Evolution of the Terrestrial Biosphere', in Stephen Schneider and Penelope Boston, eds, *Scientists on Gaia*, Cambridge, Mass. 1993, p. 388.

⁷⁶ Richard Kerr, 'Galileo Hits a Strange Spot on Jupiter', *Science*, no. 271, 2 February 1996, pp. 593–4.

⁷⁷ Bob Holmes, 'Probe Finds Jupiter Short of Water', *New Scientist*, 27 January 1996, p. 7; and Bob Holmes and Gwert Schilling, 'Hidden Helium Hears Jupiter from Within', *New Scientist*, 3 February 1996, p. 16.

⁷⁸ B. Smith et al., *Science*, no. 204, 1979, p. 951.

⁷⁹ Taylor, *Solar System Evolution*, p. xi.

model', so popular in the 1970s, with its postulates of a chemically zoned nebula and an orderly process of planetary accretion.⁸⁰

In contrast, Taylor views accretion as inherently messy and event-driven. Instead of a 'grand unified theory', he proposes a 'bottom-up' narrative in which planetary formation is the outcome of a kind of deterministic chaos. 'If large impacts of planetesimals are a characteristic feature of the final stages of planetary accretion, then the details of the individual impacts become to some extent free parameters'.⁸¹ Even in its most general features, then, the present solar system cannot be theoretically 'deduced' from the equations of the state of the original solar nebula. Singular impact events, unpredictable in any Laplacean model, have produced some of the characteristic anomalies itemized in Table 5.

Table 5

Historical (Chaotic) Features of the Solar System
(summary from Taylor)

-
- 1) atmospheres
 - 2) obliquities
 - 3) irregular satellites (in retrograde and non-equatorial orbits)
 - 4) density of Mercury
 - 5) slow retrograde rotation of Venus
 - 6) Earth/Moon system
 - 7) Asteroid belt
 - 8) crustal dichotomy of Mars
 - 9) rings of giant planets
 - 10) Pluto/Charon system
-

Taylor's solar system, in a word, is radically *historical*—which is to say, chaotic—and impact cratering is its existential moment. Classical celestial mechanics, of course, allowed no role for collisions, or for intrinsically unpredictable or irreversible outcomes. Taylor's conception of the solar system as *bricolage*, however, prescribes innumerable possible evolutionary paths out of the same initial conditions. The major planetary features 'are the result of events that might readily have taken a different turn'.⁸² Although 'other planetary systems doubtless exist', the duplication of the singular sequence that has produced the present solar system is as likely as 'finding an elephant on Mars'.⁸³

Life on Earth

This is a view broadly shared by other planetary scientists, who, in recent years, have given more precise definition to the external preconditions

⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 12–13, 289.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 181.

⁸² Ibid, p. xii. Taylor stresses that even the impacters seemed to be recruited from diverse populations specific to different regions of the solar system. He thus concludes that 'the accretion of the planets was largely a local affair, that mixing between the inner and outer reaches of the solar system was minimal and was perhaps localized even within the inner solar system ...' Ibid, p. 175.

⁸³ Ibid, pp. xi, 287–9. See also Taylor, 'The Origin of the Earth' in Geoff Brown et al., eds, *Understanding the Earth*, Cambridge 1992.

for the existence of the Earth's biosphere.⁸⁴ There seem to be four paramount contingencies. First of all, computer modelling indicates that a climate conducive to life on Earth depends upon the extraordinarily narrow orbital parameters that define a 'continuously habitable zone' (CHZ) where water can exist in a liquid state. This is sometimes called the 'Goldilocks problem', since Venus is too hot, Mars too cold and only the Earth 'just right' for life.⁸⁵

If the Earth's orbit were only 5 per cent smaller than it actually is, during the early stages of Earth's history there would have been a 'runaway greenhouse effect' [like Venus], and temperatures would have gone up until the oceans boiled away entirely! [on the other hand] if the Earth-Sun distance were as little as 1 per cent larger, there would have been runaway glaciation on Earth about 2 billion years ago. The Earth's oceans would have frozen over entirely, and would have remained so ever since, with a mean global temperature less than -50°F [like Mars].⁸⁶

(Even if Mars, as some exobiologists speculate, has preserved a 'stealth biosphere' of primitive anaerobic bacteria in the interstices of its Archean-aged crust, its engine of evolution, for all intents and purposes, is turned off.)⁸⁷

Secondly, Jupiter plays an essential role as the Earth's big brother and protector. Its vast mass prevents most Sun-bound comets from penetrating the inner solar system. Without this Jovian shield, it has been estimated that the Earth would have experienced a flux of comet-sized impactors a *thousand times larger* than actually recorded during geological time. K/T-sized catastrophes, in other words, would have taken place at 100,000-year rather than 100-million-year intervals. If the Earth's surface were not actually sterilized by such a bombardment, it is hard to imagine the survival of taxa beyond the most primitive levels of evolution. (Nils Holm and Eva Andersson suggest deep-sea hydrothermal systems as the only possible refuges from heavy bombardment.)⁸⁸ This suggests, as a minimum precondition, that only planetary systems that contain both terrestrial planets and gas giants are capable of sustaining complex life forms.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ The modern debate on terrestrial biological exceptionalism begins with Lawrence Henderson's landmark book, *The Fitness of the Environment: An Inquiry into the Biological Significance of Matter*, New York 1913.

⁸⁵ Michael Rampino and Ken Caldeira, 'The Goldilocks Problem: Climatic Evolution and Long-Term Habitability of Terrestrial Planets', *Annals Rev. Astron. Astrophys.*, no. 34, 1994, p. 83.

⁸⁶ Michael Hart, 'Atmospheric Evolution, the Drake Equation and DNA: Sparse Life in an Infinite Universe', in Ben Zuckerman and Michael Hart, eds, *Extraterrestrials: Where are They?*, Cambridge 1995 (second edition), pp. 216-17. For slightly more optimistic views of the width of the CHZ see Rampino and Caldeira, 'The Goldilocks Problem', pp. 105-6; and G. Horneck, 'Exobiology, the Study of the Origin, Evolution and Distribution of Life within the Context of Cosmic Evolution: A Review', *Planet. Space Sci.*, vol. 43, nos. 1-2 (1995), p. 195.

⁸⁷ P. Boston, M. Ivanov and C. McKay, 'On the Possibility of Chemosynthetic Ecosystems in Subsurface Habitats on Mars', *Isaerus*, no. 95, 1992, pp. 300-8.

⁸⁸ 'Hydrothermal systems are about the only environments where primitive life would have been protected against postulated meteorite impacts and partial vaporization of the ocean'. See Nils Holm and Eva Andersson, 'Abiotic Synthesis of Organic Compounds under the Conditions of Submarine Hydrothermal Systems: A Perspective', *Planet. Space Sci.*, vol. 43, nos. 1-2 (1995), p. 153.

⁸⁹ Jonathan Lunine, 'The Frequency of Planetary Systems in the Galaxy', in *Planet. Space Sci.*, vol. 43, nos. 1-2 (1995), pp. 202-3.

Thirdly, the gravitational shield of the giant planets, while highly efficient, must occasionally fail to protect the Earth. One of the central paradoxes of planetary science—the so-called ‘temperature-volatiles conundrum’—is that the temperatures for the existence of liquid water only exist in the inner solar system, while the key building blocks of life, including water itself, occur primarily beyond the asteroid belt. Indeed, the Earth ‘probably formed almost entirely devoid of the biogenic elements’. Thus some modulated frequency of cometary impacts has been necessary to convey oceans of water, as well as carbon and nitrogen, from the volatile-rich regions of the solar system to Earth. The evolution of the biosphere, in other words, has been dependent upon a subtle cometary trade surplus in imported volatiles that stops short of the impact magnitudes that would erode the atmosphere or vaporize the oceans.⁹⁰

Fourthly, the Earth’s unique and massive satellite, the Moon, plays a crucial role in stabilizing the obliquity of the Earth’s rotational axis. Locked into spin-orbit resonance with the Earth—that is, the lunar day is equivalent to the lunar month—the Moon with its high angular momentum keeps the Earth tilted within one degree (plus or minus) of 24.4° relative to its plane of revolution. Obliquity, of course, is what creates the terrestrial seasonality so important to the evolution and diversity of life. Mars, in contrast, has a wildly oscillating tilt and chaotic seasonality, while Venus, rotating slowly backward, has virtually no seasonality at all. It may be impossible for a ‘Gaian-type’ biosphere, with its complex network of self-regulating biogeochemical cycles, to evolve under such conditions, regardless of the presence of water or not.⁹¹

Extraterrestrials: Where are They?

The ‘historical’ interpretation of the solar system, therefore, would seem to reinforce the existentialist pessimism of Jacques Monod—Resistance veteran and Nobel-winning biologist—who in *Chance and Necessity* (1970) argued that ‘the universe was not pregnant with life, nor the biosphere with man’.⁹² Alternately, in the words of Zuckerman and Hart, ‘the US program of planetary exploration, while highly successful from a technical and scientific standpoint, has failed to produce even a hint of an extraterrestrial biology’.⁹³ The recent identification of planetary objects outside the solar system, and the likelihood that many more will soon be discovered, does not necessarily increase the chances of finding alien life-forms.⁹⁴ Indeed, another paradox implicit in our new understanding of

⁹⁰ C. Chyba, T. Owen and W. Ip, ‘Impact Delivery of Volatiles and Organic Molecules to Earth’, in Gehrels, *Hazards Due to Comets*, pp. 13–14, 43–4.

⁹¹ See James Pollack, ‘Atmospheres of the Terrestrial Planets’, in Beatty and Chalkin, *The New Solar System*, pp. 91–106, and D. Brownlee, ‘The Origin and Early Evolution of the Earth’, in Samuel Burcher et al., eds, *Global Biogeochemical Cycles*, London 1992, p. 18.

⁹² Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity*, New York 1971, pp. 145–6.

⁹³ ‘Preface to the Second Edition’, Zuckerman and Hart, *Extraterrestrials. Where are They?*, p. xi.

⁹⁴ Popular accounts, for example, of the discovery of the planet 70 Vir B have emphasized its congenial temperature—possibly as high as 80°C—and the possible presence of water. But, as *New Scientist* points out, ‘claims that the planet may actually support life, however, are almost certainly wishful thinking because 70 Vir B is probably a gas giant, with no rocky surface on which life could evolve’. See Gabrielle Walker, ‘Alien Worlds Boost Search for Life’, *New Scientist*, 27 January 1996, p. 17.

the solar-system is that while planetary systems may be common, life-sustaining planets are probably exceedingly rare. Planetary exploration, in other words, has drawn conclusions about the prevalence of life—or, at least, its environmental preconditions—that are antipodal to contemporary molecular biology which tends to see life as everywhere emergent, robust, even a 'cosmic imperative'. (In *Vital Dust*, for example, Nobel laureate Christian de Duve confidently asserts that 'the universe is a hotbed of life' and that 'trillions of biospheres coast through space on trillions of planets'.⁹⁵) Likewise, the new view of Earth history afforded by solar-system exploration and the K/T debate confounds the ultra-Darwinist dogma that gene-centred natural selection is the dominant, if not exclusive, evolutionary process. A planetary perspective demands a reconceptualization of the fossil record, not only in terms of impact catastrophism and mass extinctions, but also in terms of the largely non-competitive interactions that weave local ecologies into an evolving global biosphere.

Indeed, one of the major intellectual fruits of the NASA era has been the rekindling of interest in the 'biosphere' concept proposed in 1926 by the Soviet mineralogist Vladimir Vernadsky (1863–1945). Vernadsky attempted to break down the artificial barriers between biology and geology that had arisen during the late nineteenth century. He argued that life is the true architect of the Earth's surface, and that evolution necessarily reorganizes the chemistry of the atmosphere, oceans and lithosphere. The biosphere, therefore, encompasses all the biogeochemical networks—'transformers' in Vernadsky's terminology—by which life increasingly commands geology and accelerates the 'the biogenic migration of atoms'.⁹⁶ (Although life, at any one time, may seem only an insignificant scrim on the face of the Earth, the total mass of all organisms that have ever lived has been estimated as 1,000 or even 10,000 times the mass of the Earth itself!)⁹⁷ Moreover, as Alexej Ghilarov has emphasized, Vernadsky believed in a 'deep natural connection between all organisms and the planetary scale'. As founder of the USSR's Committee on Meteorites, he was also fascinated by the possible chemical interchanges between biosphere and cosmos.⁹⁸

Although Vernadsky's ideas exercised a subtle influence on the emergence of the 'ecosystem' paradigm in North American ecology—largely through the friendship of his son and the Yale biologist C. Evelyn Hutchinson⁹⁹—biospheric thinking had little prestige in non-Soviet Earth science until the late 1960s when NASA's began investigating techniques for discovering life on other planets. The debate about life on Mars, in particular, prompted a re-examination of life's global imprint

⁹⁵ Christian de Duve, *Vital Dust: The Origin and Evolution of Life on Earth*, New York 1995, p. 292.

⁹⁶ Alexej Ghilarov, 'Vernadsky's Biosphere Concept: An Historical Perspective', *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, vol. 70, no. 2 (1995), pp. 193–203. Together with the Norwegian V.M. Goldschmidt (1888–1947), Vernadsky founded the modern science of biogeochemistry.

⁹⁷ Rampino and Caldeira, 'The Goldilocks Problem', p. 103.

⁹⁸ Ghilarov, 'Vernadsky's Biosphere Concept'.

⁹⁹ See Frank Golley, *A History of the Ecosystem Concept in Ecology*, New Haven 1993, pp. 58–9.

on Earth processes, especially the maintenance of an oxygen (21 per cent) atmosphere in radical chemical disequilibrium. James Lovelock, one of the NASA researchers, more or less reinvented Vernadsky with his bold 'Gaia' hypothesis that, for organisms to survive, they must 'occupy their planet extensively and evolve with it as a single system ... The evolution of the species and the evolution of their environment are tightly coupled together as a single and inseparable process'.¹⁰⁰

Although most scientists remain sceptical of Lovelock's claims that Gaia is a literal 'superorganism' with the ability to regulate environmental conditions for its own survival, the Gaia controversy, like the K/T debate, has refreshed the Earth sciences by stimulating interdisciplinary research on global biogeochemical cycles and the evolutionary implications of plate-tectonic theory.¹⁰¹ The 'Vernadskian worldview', as Lovelock calls it, has also been congenial to those biologists who see symbiosis and mutualism as major mechanisms in evolution.¹⁰² As Lynn Margulis and others have argued, the Darwinian arena of competitive natural selection assumes a pre-existing biosphere largely constructed by cooperative guilds of bacteria, protozoa, fungi and plants.¹⁰³ Moreover, the ultra-Darwinist camp have failed to recognize that a competitive organism at one level of analysis is somebody else's ecology at another. ("The 'individuals' handled as unities in the population equations are themselves symbiotic complexes involving uncounted numbers of live entities integrated in diverse ways in an unstudied fashion."¹⁰⁴)

The greatest challenge to Darwinist gradualism, however, remains the role of periodic mass extinctions. On the one hand, intransigent geneticists and population ecologists, led by Richard Dawkins, continue to define evolution primarily in terms of 'background extinction' rates and the gradual turnover of species. On the other hand, geologists and palaeontologists are focused on the irrefutable evidence of catastrophic cascades of extinction that have decimated higher taxa, including entire orders and even classes. Can the event at the end of the Permian era, for example, that extinguished 96 per cent of the Earth's species really be compared to Darwin's thin wedge and the fine-tuning of natural selection?

¹⁰⁰ James Lovelock, *The Ages of Gaia*, New York 1995 (revised edition), pp. 7, 11.

¹⁰¹ See the feast of ideas in Boston, *Scientists on Gaia*.

¹⁰² Again, early twentieth-century Russian science—as in the cases of planetary theory and nonlinear dynamics—was in the forefront of symbiotic biology with such seminal, but forgotten figures as Faminin, Mereschkovskii and Kozo-Polianski. See Lynn Margulis, 'Symbiogenesis and Symbionicism', in Lynn Margulis and Rene Fester, eds, *Symbiosis as a Source of Evolutionary Innovation: Speciation and Morphogenesis*, Cambridge, Mass. 1991, pp. 2–7.

¹⁰³ Mark and Diana McMenamin, for example, have recently argued that mycorrhiza and other symbiotic fungi integrate all terrestrial flora into a single system—'Hypersas'—of nutrient circulation. See their *Hypersas. Life on Land*, New York 1994. For a brilliant defence, however, of the (competitive) Darwinian pathways to mutualism and the orchestration of biomes into a global biosphere, see E. G. Nisbet, 'Archaean Ecology', in M. Coward and A. Rice, eds, *Early Prokaryotic Processes*, Geological Society Special Publications, no. 95, London 1995, pp. 46–7.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

The Survival Lottery

The neo-catastrophist response is scathing. Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge are cruel but honest when they insist that mass extinction really means 'evolution by lottery' and 'survival of the luckiest'. Extinction events ruthlessly reset all ecological clocks.¹⁰⁵ Species interactions play little role in determining survival in the aftermath of great bolide impacts; and the major watersheds in the evolution of life do not work by orthodox natural selection. (For example, the decisive 'adaptive advantage' of mammals during the K/T catastrophe simply may have been their concentration in circum-polar regions least affected by the low-latitude Chicxulub impact.) Hence Darwin, like Laplace, must submit to revision by chaos and historical contingency. Discussing the radical evolutionary implications of the Alvarez hypothesis, Eldredge clearly echoes Taylor and Monod: 'Evolutionary history... is deeply and richly contingent. Gone are the last vestiges of the idea that evolution inevitably and inexorably replaces the old and comparatively inferior with superior new models. Evolution, at least on a grand scale, is not forever tinkering, trying to come up with a better mouse-trap.'¹⁰⁶ Evolution by catastrophe, Michael Rampino adds, also entails speciation through a different process than the classic gradualist mechanisms of geographic isolation and adaptive change. Catastrophe replaces the linear temporal creep of microevolution with non-linear bursts of macroevolution. Comet show-ers accelerate evolutionary change by injecting huge pulses of sudden energy into biogeochemical circuits. Nutrient recycling is stimulated and bolides add new stocks of organic molecules.¹⁰⁷ (According to the comet astronomer Duncan Steel, the Earth accumulates an average of 200,000 tons of cosmic debris per year.)¹⁰⁸

Most importantly, catastrophes break up static ecosystems and clear adaptive space for the explosive radiation of new taxa—like mammals after the K/T horizon. Rampino, awed by this dialectic of creative destruction, openly wonders if impact catastrophe is not the real driving force behind the movement toward greater biological diversity, and if Gaia has not evolved in intricate choreography with Shiva—the ultimate form of macroevolution?¹⁰⁹

Rampino, of course, is not the first to wonder about the Earth's strange waltz with apocalyptic comets. Indeed, the postmodern hypothesis that life on a planetary scale is periodically renewed by extraterrestrial cataclysm uncannily echoes the baroque cosmology of Restoration England. In a paper read to the Royal Society in 1694, for example, Edmund Halley—after whom, of course, the famous comet is named—argued that

¹⁰⁵ Simon Conway Morris, 'Ecology in Deep Time', *TREE*, vol. 10, no. 7 (1995), p. 292

¹⁰⁶ Niles Eldredge, *Reinventing Darwin: The Great Debate at the High Table of Evolutionary Theory*, New York 1995, p. 156

¹⁰⁷ 'Comets are of special interest to exobiology because—among all celestial bodies—they contain the largest amount of organic molecules... It has been argued, that a soft landing of a cometary nucleus on the surface of a 'suitable' planet may provide all prerequisites for life to originate' Horneck, 'Exobiology', p. 192

¹⁰⁸ Steel, *Regius Astronomer*, p. 91, but Horneck estimates only 10,000 tons. 'Exobiology', p. 194.

¹⁰⁹ Rampino, 'Impact Cratering and Flood Basalt Volcanism', pp. 387–8. See also M. Rampino and B. Haggerty, 'The "Shiva Hypothesis": Impacts, Mass Extinctions and the Galaxy', *Earth, Moon, and Planets*, no. 72, 1996, pp. 441–60

the Earth over time inevitably becomes sterile and infertile. Great comets annihilate existing populations, but also renew the Earth's fertility and prepare the way for new creations. 'Deadly in the short term but healthful in the long run, cometary collisions allowed for the succession of worlds.'¹¹⁰

V. Taurid Demons

'Even within the short history of *Homo sapiens*, the most violent events on Earth have been extraterrestrial impacts.'

John Lewis¹¹¹

Like the supporters of Gaia, the advocates of the Shiva hypothesis are a small but seminal scientific minority. In light of the overwhelming evidence that impact cratering has remained a significant geological process throughout the Phanerozoic aeon, they have built a respectable case for its episodic role in detouring evolution down new and unpredictable pathways. And, together with other neo-catastrophists, they have added impressive scaffolding to the Gould-Eldredge theory of punctuated equilibrium and chaotic Earth history. The Impact Hypothesis, in other words, now has a firm purchase within geological time (10^7 to 10^9 years), and an important beachhead, established by the K/T debate, within evolutionary time (10^6 to 10^8 years). But what about ecological time (10^4 to 10^6 years) and cultural time (10^2 to 10^4 years)? Have impact events left their catastrophic imprints within human history? Few questions in Earth science are more controversial.

In 1993, for example, two Austrian scientists published a book in which they claimed to solve the mystery of 'the darkest chapter in human history': the deluge catastrophe chronicled in the Gilgamesh Epic, the Old Testament, the Vedas and scores of oral traditions all over the world. Edith Kristan-Tollmann and Alexander Tollmann marshalled anthropological and geological evidence to support their thesis that seven large cometary fragments had struck the ocean nearly ten millennia ago, causing terrible tsunamis now recalled as the Flood. On the one hand, they cited numerous ancient accounts of 'seven invading stars', ranging from the 'great burning mountains' of the Jewish prophet Henoch to the 'fiery sons of Muspels' in Icelandic saga, which they interpreted as contemporaneous with flood legends. On the other hand, they presented 'geological proof' in the form of tektites (glassy impact ejecta) 'with an age of nearly ten thousand years' from Australia and Vietnam, as well as the small Kofels impact crater in the Austrian Tyrol—caused, they said, by a 'splinter' of the Noachian comet.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Sara Genuth, 'Newton and the Ongoing Teleological Role of Comets', in Thrower, *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants*, pp. 302–3. Halley's assertion—with which Newton apparently concurred—that the earth was 'the wreck of a former world' caused consternation in Church of England circles and led to his loss of the Savilian chair in astronomy at Oxford. See Kubrin, in *ibid.*, pp. 64–6.

¹¹¹ Lewis, *Rain of Iron and Ice*, p. 157.

¹¹² Edith Kristan-Tollmann and Alexander Tollmann, 'The Youngest Big Impact on Earth Deduced from Geological and Historical Evidence', *Terra Nova*, no. 6, 1994, pp. 209–17.

Although the Tollmans created a predictable stir in the popular media, they were punctually massacred in the scientific press. In one review, a team of eminent meteoriticists, including R.A.F. Grieve, dismissed their 'evidence' as 'sheer fantasy' and characterized their approach as 'pseudoscience in the tradition of Donnelly and Velikovsky'. The critics systematically demolished their tektite dating as well as their exaggerated claims for the Kofels structure.¹¹³

Of course, this is hardly the first case where the self-proclaimed confirmation for biblical or mythical events has turned into a fiasco. The whole intellectual terrain of archaeological and historical catastrophism has been polluted by far too many bizarre hypotheses and spurious discoveries. Rare or unique astronomical phenomena have become the staple diet of a burgeoning genre of fringe-science, mega-disaster books.¹¹⁴ Yet, at the risk of ridicule, cometary astronomers—led by Victor Clube at Oxford and William Napier at Edinburgh—have persevered in arguing a scientific case for cosmic intervention in human history. They claim, in fact, that some ancient societies almost surely experienced the shattering equivalent of nuclear warfare.

In an important restatement of the theory that they have been developing over the last twenty years, Clube and Napier—together with David Asher and Duncan Steel from the Anglo-Australian Observatory—contrast two different interpretations of impact tectonics. 'Stochastic catastrophism', as they call it, is concerned with the extra-terrestrial influence upon the geological *longue durée*. It relies on averaged cratering rates, derived from known terrestrial structures and from the impact records of the Moon and inner planets. The history of small, but more frequent impactors (less than one kilometre in diameter) is discriminated against in this approach because they do not individually produce global consequences, and because terrestrial erosion more quickly erases their footprints.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the data set is too coarse-grained to resolve temporal heterogeneities—clustered events, for instance—within frequencies of less than one million years. As a result, it cannot differentiate what Clube and Napier call the 'microstructure of terrestrial catastrophism' within the time periods relevant to human evolution.¹¹⁶

'Coherent catastrophism', on the other hand, contends that 'the overall effect of giant comets on terrestrial evolution is far more complex than that of single giant impacts.' Impact events operate on all time-scales, and punctational crises are 'hierarchically nested in the overall manner of glacial-interglacials'. To visualize this entire spectrum of phenomena, especially the influence of small-body impacts, Clube and Napier have augmented cratering data and near-Earth-object censuses with a wealth

¹¹³ Alexander Deutsch et al., 'The Impact-Flood Connection Does It Exist?', *Terra Nova*, no. 6, pp. 644–50. Ignatius Donnelly was the apocalyptic American populist, whose *Ragnarok: The Age of Fire and Gravel*, was a sensation of the 1880s, while Immanuel Velikovsky, of course, is the notorious author of *Worlds in Collision*, 1950.

¹¹⁴ For a recent example, see D. Allan and J. Declair, *When the Earth Nearly Died: Compelling Evidence of a Catastrophic World Change—9,5000 BC*, Bath 1995.

¹¹⁵ For a discussion of the dependence of the 'decay constant' on crater size, see S. Yabushita, 'Are Periodicities in Crater Formations and Mass Extinctions Related?', *Earth, Moon and Planets*, no. 64, 1994, pp. 209–10.

¹¹⁶ D. Asher, S. Clube, W. Napier and D. Steel, 'Coherent Catastrophism', *Vistas in Astronomy*, no. 38, 1994, pp. 5, 20–1.

of historical data, including medieval European records and Chinese astronomical archives.¹¹⁷

While other researchers, moreover, have been absorbed in the search for catastrophic celebrities, like billion-megaton exterminator bolides, they have been focused on the study of the more prosaic population of communitarian products—small Apollo asteroids, meteoroidal swarms, zodiacal dust—resulting from the break-up of giant comets. Although the comets only arrive in Earth-crossing orbits at 100,000-year-or-so intervals, their debris 'interact catastrophically with the Earth on relatively short time-scales: 10^2 – 10^3 years'. Clube, in fact, has argued that because of the frequency of small-body impacts, terrestrial catastrophism may be 'uniformitarian' at all time-scales greater than a millennium. Thus, a 'new world view, embracing the effects of the full range of "small bodies" in the Solar System... has become one of the outstanding imperatives of our time'.¹¹⁸

Astronomy Meets History

The foremost concerns of Clube and Napier are the organized swarms of 10 to 300-metre objects—Arjunas and small Apollos—that they claim bombard the Earth every few thousand years.¹¹⁹ These bodies are responsible for the 'low-level catastrophism on "biblical time-scales"' that was 'the subject of interest to Newton and his contemporaries as well as to the early nineteenth-century catastrophists'. 'We believe', they add, 'that there is at least one such cluster of material currently existing, which over the past twenty thousand years has produced episodes of atmospheric detonations with significant consequences for the terrestrial environment, and for mankind'. The 'major danger to mankind' that Clube and Napier have in mind are the Taurids.¹²⁰

The Taurid complex is a large circum-solar stream of cometary and asteroidal debris in sub-Jovian orbit that Clube and Napier believe resulted from the hierarchical break-up of a large comet over the last 20,000 years. In addition to the remnant Comet P/Encke, the complex includes a half-dozen Apollo-type asteroids more than one kilometre in diameter, four major meteor streams—responsible for the daytime and nocturnal Taurid showers—a zodiacal dust cloud, and, most menacingly, hundreds of thousands of boulder-sized Arjunas that, like so many orbiting hydrogen bombs, are capable of multi-megaton atmospheric blasts or surface impacts on Earth. (As we saw earlier, recent Spacewatch data suggests that the general population of these mini-asteroids may be forty times greater than previously believed.)¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ibid, and S. Clube, 'Evolution, Punctuational Crises and the Threat to Civilization', *Earth, Moon, and Planets*, no. 72, 1996, p. 437.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 81, 94, 104.

¹¹⁹ The small Arjunas—100-times more numerous than predicted by the power-law spectrum of true asteroids—may be 'mostly fragments of decayed comets'. See D. Rabinowitz, 'The Flux of Small Asteroids Near the Earth', *Asteroids, Comets, Meteors* 1991, Lunar and Planetary Institute, Houston 1992, p. 484.

¹²⁰ V. Clube 'The Catastrophic Role of Giant Comets', p. 101, and Asher et al., 'Coherent Catastrophism', p. 5.

¹²¹ Clube and Napier, *The Cosmic Winter*, pp. 152, 157, Asher et al., 'Coherent Catastrophism', pp. 7, 15, Steel, *Rogue Asteroids*, p. 203, and Tom Gehrels, 'Collisions with Comets and Asteroids', *Scientific American*, March 1996, p. 59.

The Taurids, according to Clube and Napier, pose the maximum hazard every few thousand years when the precession of the stream's orbit produces an intersection with the Earth's. These 'comet ages', which may last several centuries, are characterized by clusters of Tunguska-sized impacts mostly coordinated with the daytime beta-Taurid meteor showers (24 June to 6 July), as well as unusual concentrations of meteoric dust. Duncan Steel confirms a Taurid signature in a variety of geophysical phenomena, including unusual iridium and nickel anomalies within the Greenland ice cap. Within the late Holocene, Clube and Napier, supported by Steel and Asher, identify three periods of intense bombardment: in the centuries around 3000 BC, 1200 BC and 500 AD.¹²²

Where, then, are the ensuing Taurid catastrophes in the human record? Staring us in the face, according to Clube and Napier, in the form of the religious and secular texts from an extraordinary diversity of cultures. They have devoted three books—*The Cosmic Serpent* (1982), *The Origin of Comets* (1989) and *The Cosmic Winter* (1990)—to an exhaustive elaboration of possible correlations between human accounts of cometary crises and Taurid storms as predicted by orbital mechanics. To take two examples: around 3000 BC, they find a universality of malevolent sky gods and the political dominance of astronomer priests in an era which may have been environmentally disrupted by the break-up of Comet P/Buckley's huge progenitor. Then, nearly 3,500 years later, when the Taurids are again crossing the Earth's orbit, Chinese astronomers warn of a 'strange comet' in the same year that a monk describes scenes—still historically unexplained—of extraordinary devastation and social collapse in Britain.¹²³

But Clube and Napier do not confine themselves to mere correlation and anecdote. In addition to providing a new framework for understanding ecological upheavals, they also make sweeping claims about the history of human attitudes toward nature. Virtually all major cultures have experienced alternating periods of cosmic optimism and cosmic despair. At different times, the heavens have been seen as providential or as menacing. The Taurid storms, they propose, have been the secret prime-movers of this eschatological cycle. The two cometary crises of the pre-Roman world, for example, were 'fundamental turning points in human history and they fathered doom-laden beliefs in the end of the world which were probably realistic and which have never since entirely disappeared'. Again, in the comet-vexed seventeenth century, Cromwell rose to power on a millenarian wave fuelled by 'supernatural illumination'.¹²⁴

Clube and Napier make the intriguing suggestion that materialism in the classical world arose as a reaction to the tyranny of prehistoric sky gods and their malign cosmos. Indeed, the main stem of European philosophy from Aristotle to Kant has been obsessed with exorcising the

¹²² V. Clube 'The Catastrophic Role of Giant Comets', pp. 101–4; Steel, *Regius Asteroids*, pp. 151–3. In addition, Chinese and Japanese meteor records, which Clube and Napier have mined, show flux maxima around 1000 AD and 1900 AD, which have been interpreted as Taurid in origin. See Ichiro Hasegawa, 'Historical Variation in the Meteor Flux as Found in Chinese and Japanese Chronicles', *Celestial Mechanics and Dynamical Astronomy*, no. 54, 1992, pp. 129–42.

¹²³ V. Clube 'The Catastrophic Role of Giant Comets', pp. 39, 103–4.

¹²⁴ Clube and Napier, *Cosmic Winter*, p. 172.

dread of comets and providing rational explanations for their appearance. The 'critique of comets', therefore, has been an essential precondition for establishing a view of history as open to infinite possibility within a benevolent or at least neutral cosmos. Conversely, philosophical materialism has always been opposed by millenarian ideologies, including neo-Platonism, that see history as bounded by cataclysm, even human extinction. In this tradition comets have always been recognized as potent agents of destruction and/or rebirth. Clube and Napier challenge historians to look for an actual environmental cycle—like the Taurid precessions—that may lie behind this alternation of optimistic and catastrophist philosophical systems.¹²⁵

Yet the Clube and Napier thesis remains more fascinating than convincing. Although they bring new tools—especially Clube's study of the Chinese fireball records—to the interpretation of the transcultural 'apocalyptic record', the correlations with natural history are hardly more than circumstantial. What really can be deduced, after all, from such 'evidence' as the fact that Hebrew word for iron ore (*nacushet*) literally means 'snake shit' or that friezes of Quetzlocoatl sometimes make the plumed god look like a fiery comet?¹²⁶ Clube and Napier, unfortunately, are rarely able to corroborate exegesis from myth or religion with material evidence from archaeology—as, for instance, in the recent excavation in Holland of 1,700-year-old pit configurations in the shape of the constellation Taurus.¹²⁷

Bombardment or Eruption?

More egregiously, they have bent events out of all recognition to support their contention—derived from orbital calculations—that Taurid bombardments produced the crisis of civilization in the eastern Mediterranean around 1450 BC. The Minoan world did collapse catastrophically, but the explanation does not require the resolution of any extra-terrestrial mysteries. Indeed, the modern tourist to the island of Santorini (Thera) can gaze straight into huge, sea-filled caldera that was produced by four major volcanic events between 1628 and 1450 BC. The final eruption of Thera, which blew the entire volcanic cone into the atmosphere, has been described as 'a natural catastrophe unparalleled in all of history', and its indelible signature can be found all over the world, in California tree rings as well as Greenland ice cores. With ten times the explosive power of Krakatau, Thera did terrible damage to Crete and produced a tsunami that engulfed the coasts of Palestine and Egypt. Such geomyths as the biblical plagues and the exodus event may be descriptions of the eruptions and their aftermarks.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ *Cosmic Serpent*, pp. 157 passim and 254; Clube and Napier, *Cosmic Winter*, p. 172.

¹²⁶ They frequently rely on the adventurous interpretation of cuneiform omens by Judith Björckman, 'Meteors and Meteorites in the Ancient Near East', *Meteoritics*, vol. 8 (1973), pp. 91–132.

¹²⁷ Clube and Napier, *Cosmic Serpent*, London 1982, p. 196; Govert Schilling, 'Stars fell on Muggenburg', *New Scientist*, 16 December 1995, pp. 33–4. On the existence of similar 'Taurid pits' at Stonehenge I, see Steel, *Ragnar Asteroids*, pp. 148–9.

¹²⁸ For the Clube-Napier view, see chapter 10, '1369 BC', in *The Cosmic Serpent*, pp. 224–72. On Thera, see P. LeMoreaux, 'Worldwide Environmental Impacts from the Eruption of Thera', *Environmental Geology*, no. 26, 1995, pp. 172–5; and D. Hardy, et al., eds, *Thera and the Aegean World III*, Proceedings of the Third Congress (Santorini), The Thera Foundation, London 1990.

Nor is even the Taurid Complex itself established as an indisputable fact. In a recent review of orbital calculations, one team of researchers concluded that the 'hypothesis of genetic relationship among some or all of these bodies in [comet] Encke-like orbits is not supported [nor was it refuted]'. They also disputed Clube and Napier's other key hypothesis that Encke had been formed from the break-up of a giant cometary nucleus over the last 20,000 years. And, finally, they predicted that most objects in Taurid orbits would fall into the Sun, not collide with the inner planets.¹²⁹

Clube and Napier's task, it seems, is like trying to capture an elephant with a butterfly net. Textual evidence alone, even where reinforced with Chinese and Japanese astronomical records, is obviously insufficient to establish strong correlations between predicted Taurid storms and the dark ages of human history. Like other impact theorists, Clube and Napier are monocausalists who minimize the role of diverse catastrophic agencies, especially volcanism, in Earth history. Yet, unlike the Tollmans, the Oxford team has marshalled considerable evidence—from studies of cratering fluxes and NEO populations—to support their core hypothesis that major bombardment episodes are likely to have intersected human history.¹³⁰

One missing link, of course, is archaeological evidence of otherwise unexplained destruction; the other, is geological documentation of impacts or airbursts. It should not be supposed that the holocene cratering record is in any sense complete. For example, the recently discovered Iturralde impact basin (eight kilometres in diameter) in the Bolivian Amazon—the product of a 500 megaton impact around 8000 BC—has not yet been inspected from the ground.¹³¹ Nor have geologists yet explored the Curuca River region, near the Brazil–Peru border, where Landsat photographs suggest a crater swathe produced by the 'Brazilian Tunguska event' of 13 August 1930 that has attracted the interest of researchers trying to calculate the impact frequency of Arjuna.¹³² Even more spectacular, and still incompletely studied, is the thirty-kilometre-long chain of craters near Rio Cuarto, Argentina which was not discovered until 1989. The best radio-carbon dating so far is around 2900 BC: well within the time-window of Clube and Napier's first Taurid catastrophe. Moreover, the impact by the 300-metre bolide packed a punch (1,000 megatons) equivalent to Thera, ten Kratakaus, or 50,000 Hiroshima-sized nuclear weapons.¹³³

¹²⁹ See G. Valacchi et al., 'The Dynamics of Objects in Orbits Resembling that of P/Encke', *Icarus*, vol. 181, no. 1 (1995), pp. 177–9, and J. Klacka, 'The Taurid Complex of Asteroids', *Astronomy and Astrophysics*, March 1995.

¹³⁰ Other impact experts dispute the probability of an impact catastrophe in ancient history. Morrison et al., for example, argue that the estimated dozen or more multiple-megaton events within human history probably involved sparsely inhabited areas like the Amazon or Siberia: 'it is unlikely that Tunguska-like impact would destroy even one city in the entire 10-millennium span of human history'. 'The Impact Hazard', p. 67.

¹³¹ K. Campbell, R. Grieve, J. Pacheco and B. Garvin, 'A Newly Discovered Probable Impact Structure in Amazonian Bolivia', *National Geographic Research*, vol. 5, 1989, pp. 495–9.

¹³² Patrick Huyghe, 'Incident at Curuca', *The Scientist*, March–April 1995, p. 16. The Curuca impact, if one megaton or larger, would suggest a higher frequency of Tunguska-type events, perhaps two or more per century, than previously believed. (pp. 14–15).

¹³³ P. Schultz and R. Lianza, 'Recent Grazing Impacts on the Earth Recorded in the Rio Cuarto Crater Field', *Nature*, no. 355, 1992, pp. 234–7 (they estimate largest crater was the result of a 350 megaton impact), and Lewis, *Rain of Iron and Ice*, pp. 88, 99 (estimate of total megatonnage).

Yet only one-quarter of the cratering record is preserved on land. As NASA's John Lewis reminds us, 'three out of every four impacts on Earth hit water'.¹³⁴ Since the beginning of the First Dynasty in Egypt, it is estimated that 500 NEOs, equal in size or larger to the Arjuna that created Meteor Crater in Arizona, have struck the earth. Approximately 375 of these should have impacted in the ocean.¹³⁵ When a high-velocity object weighing hundreds of thousands or millions of tons strikes the ocean, the resulting hydrodynamics are extraordinary. Large-body impacts, for example, will produce huge, explosive steam bubbles—up to 500 km³ in the case of Chicxulub bolide—and heat vast areas of the ocean.¹³⁶ Some theorists predict that such extreme ocean warming could feed energy to runaway super-hurricanes, known as 'hypercanes', which, in turn, might lift vast, climate-changing quantities of water and aerosols into the stratosphere.¹³⁷

Bodies bigger than 100 meters, moreover, will manufacture nightmare tsunamis right out of science-fiction. Steel, for example, predicts that a 500-metre-diameter asteroid impact in the Pacific, say 1,000 kilometres off the coast of Los Angeles, could produce a tsunami *several kilometres in height*.¹³⁸ Even an impact one-tenth that size would still result in a super-wave nearly twenty stories high; and two cheerful Japanese researchers recently warned of 1–2 per cent possibility that 'most artificial construction on the coastline of the Pacific will be destroyed in the next century by asteroidal impact in the Pacific'.¹³⁹

Given the three-fold greater frequency of marine impacts and the ten-fold greater lethality of tsunamis versus ground impacts—where is the smoking gun? So far, there are only a few tantalizing clues. Lewis points to a extraordinary tsunami deposit on Lanai as high as the Empire State Building.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps some of the great waves depicted in Japanese painting and traditionally attributed to earthquakes are actually meteoroidal in origin. But nobody really knows, since 'the entire research field of geologic assessments of tsunami produced by impactors is virtually non-existent and needs to be initiated'.¹⁴¹ In the last instance, Clube and

¹³⁴ Lewis, *Rain of Iron and Ice*, p. 151.

¹³⁵ The source of the Meteor Crater was an iron asteroid fragment thirty to fifty metres in diameter. 'The earth collides with an object of this size or larger once in a century'. Tom Gehrels, 'Collisions with Comets and Asteroids', *Scientific American*, March 1995, p. 55. However Neukum and Ivanov indicate a much lower cratering rate. See 'Crater Size Distributions and Impact Probabilities', p. 411.

¹³⁶ H. Melosh, 'The Mechanics of Large Meteoroid Impacts in the Earth's Oceans', in Leon Silver and Peter Schultz, eds, *Geological Implications of Impacts of Large Asteroids and Comets on the Earth* (1981 Snowbird conference), GSA special paper 190, 1982, pp. 121–6.

¹³⁷ Kerry Emanuel et al., 'Hypercanes: A Possible Link in Global Extinction Scenarios', *Journal of Geophysical Research*, vol. 100, no. D7 (1995), pp. 13,755–65.

¹³⁸ Steel, *Rain of Iron and Ice*, p. 40.

¹³⁹ Lewis, *Rain of Iron and Ice*, p. 157; S. Yabushita and N. Hattori, 'On the Possible Hazard to the Major Cities Caused by an Asteroid Impact in the Pacific Ocean', *Earth, Moon and Planets*, no. 65, 1994, p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis, *Rain of Iron and Ice*, p. 150.

¹⁴¹ J. Hills et al., 'Tsunami Generated by Small Asteroid Impacts' in Gehrels, *Hazards Due to Comets*, p. 788. Devonian megabreccias in the Las Vegas area recently have been identified as the signature of an asteroid impact in the paleo-Pacific Ocean. See J. Warne and C. Sandberg, 'Alamo Megabreccia: Record of a Late Devonian Impact in Southern Nevada', *GSA Today*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1994).

Napier are probably correct to surmise that some outpost of ancient humanity was subjected to a sudden horror almost beyond description. But the where and when of this holocaust remain one of history's greatest enigmas.

VI. Hidden Histories

Hutton's rigidity is both a boon and a trap. It gave us deep time, but we lost history in the process. Any adequate account of the earth requires both'

Stephen Jay Gould¹⁴²

On 1 March 1996, a team of geologists from the United States, Austria and South Africa announced a stunning discovery: a ninety-kilometre impact crater buried beneath the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. After using seismic reflection to determine the outline of the multi-ring structure, they drilled scores of bore holes inside and outside the crater rim. They recovered samples of impact melt breccia and other tell-tale evidence of massive shock metamorphism in the target rock. In addition, the detailed chemistry of the breccia cores coincided with the isotopic composition of tektites previously retrieved by the Deep Sea Drilling Project from the seabed 330 kilometres north-east of Chesapeake Bay. The researchers dated the impact at 35.5 million years ago, near the boundary of the Eocene and Oligocene epochs.¹⁴³

The Chesapeake impact—30 million years after the K/T cataclysm—broadly correlates with the 'terminal Eocene event'. Unlike the K/T boundary, however, where majority scientific opinion now supports the instantaneity of extinction,¹⁴⁴ the drastic biotic changes at the end of the Eocene probably occurred in 'stepwise' fashion over several million years. Indeed, iridium anomalies and tektite deposits indicate serial impacts—an 'Uzi burst' in Shaw's terminology—of which the Chesapeake bolide was perhaps the largest. Rampino and Haggerty suggest a complex sequence of feedbacks between individual impact events, atmospheric dust veils and rapid climate shifts, leading to the formation of the East Antarctic ice-cap and a colder global climate in the Oligocene.¹⁴⁵

The discovery of the Chesapeake structure, at the predicted Holmsian frequency, as well as the recent correlation of a chain of craters—probably cometary in origin—in northern Chad to the great Devonian extinction, reinforces the case for coherent catastrophism.¹⁴⁶ Even the spacing

¹⁴² Steven Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle*, Cambridge, Mass. 1987, p. 97

¹⁴³ Russian researchers also claim an end Eocene date for the 100-kilometre Popigai crater in Siberia. See Grieve and Pesonen, 'Terrestrial Impact Craters', p. 367.

¹⁴⁴ For the disintegration of the case for protracted extinction, see Peter Ward's account of the 1994 'Snowbird Three' conference: 'The K/T Trial', *Paleobiology*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1995), pp. 245–7.

¹⁴⁵ M. Rampino, and B. Haggerty, 'Extraterrestrial Impacts and Mass Extinctions of Life', in Gehrels, *Hazards Due to Comets*, p. 846. The Eocene palaeontologist, Donald Prothero, concedes the impacts but denies they played any significant role in the chaotic turnover of terrestrial and marine fauna. See *The Eocene-Oligocene Transition: Paradise Lost*, New York 1994, pp. 129–50.

¹⁴⁶ See NASA Press Release: 96 55, 'Chain of Impact Craters Suggested by Spaceborne Radar Images', 20 March 1996.

between impacts conforms to the Clube-Napier hypothesis of episodic giant-comet storms unleashed by galactic tides.¹⁴⁷ Yet, as the radical divergence between the K/T and terminal Eocene upheavals demonstrates, it is probably foolish to expect any replication in detail between different catastrophes. As one of the leading researchers on mass extinctions has emphasized, 'nonlinearities, thresholds, and elaborate feedbacks often rule out the reconstruction of simple cause-and-effect cascades. The same forcing factor might have radically different effects depending on the state of the system at the time of perturbation, and several alternative forcing factors might produce the same biotic response.'¹⁴⁸ What great impact events share in common is their capacity to reorganize the global biosphere on a supra-Darwinian scale. But each major extinction sequence—including those in which impacts may not have played a role—has been a unique historical conjuncture.

Indeed, from a geological standpoint, impacts are the functional equivalents of wars and revolutions in human history. As we have seen, catastrophes are both condensations of temporal process—for instance, a million years of 'normal' environmental work condensed into hours, even seconds—and exponential escalations of the energy circulating through the planetary metabolism. In this dual sense, comet bombardments act as superchargers of geological and biological evolution. But catastrophe is equally an eruption of historicity: a literal cascade of events that are too singular, complex and, perhaps, sensitive to initial conditions to be captured in any exact model or grand unified theory. Whereas Shaw appeals to the philosophers' stone of chaos theory, Clube and Napier evoke the concept of 'episodicity' to characterize periodic functions modified by random events.¹⁴⁹ Yet the banned word 'narrative' might also be relevant. The permanent revolution in earth science, first and above all, has been an insurrection in the name of Natural History with a capital 'H'. And the greatest discovery of solar system exploration has been an existential Earth shaped by the creative energies of its catastrophes.

¹⁴⁷ S. Clube and W. Napier, 'Giant Comets and the Galaxy. Implications of the Terrestrial Record', in R. Smoluchowski, J. Bahcall, and M. Matthews, eds, *The Galaxy and the Solar System*, Tucson 1986, pp. 260–85. This is the most elegant of the diverse presentations of the 'Clube-Napier Hypothesis', and it contains important clarifications of the difference between single impacts and protracted bombardment episodes (pp. 277–8), and the potential climate-shifting role of zodiacal 'dustings' of the stratosphere (pp. 271–7).

¹⁴⁸ D. Jablonski, 'Mass Extinctions: Persistent Problems and New Directions', in *New Developments Regarding the K/T Event*, p. 56.

¹⁴⁹ Clube and Napier, 'Giant Comets', pp. 277–8.

Paul T— Investigates

Episode 1: At Contrac Headquarters.

James Markham did not have many hidden powers. Only quietly manifest ones. European Director of the major construction company, Contrac, he made £60 million sound like the price of an evening newspaper. 'If I decide that something needs doing, it gets done,' he said, matter-of-factly. Across the expanse of an executive desk, he faced a research investigator from the University of Central Wapping, Paul T—?, he couldn't remember his second name, and it didn't matter. He only remembered on a 'need to remember' basis.

'We like your research idea, Paul. I've already taken it to the Board, and they like it too. We want you to do it for us. It fits our needs.'

Paul T stalled before he started. 'How do you mean, do it for you?' he asked, thinking that scientific objectivity was about to be violated without putting up any resistance.

'It's simply this. We are undertaking a strategic review of the company's

operations, and we want you to talk to our workforce. We don't want it to appear like it's coming from us. It's got to look independent, completely independent. That's why we need you. Your proposal fell on my desk at just the right time.'

Paul T was more accustomed to having to be ingratiatingly persuasive to employers. This was a new problem. He couldn't figure out what a strategic review had to do with an obscure piece of academic research. He also couldn't figure out what the strategy was behind the 'strategic', and he wasn't about to find out.

'You say you want to visit a couple of our sites, to interview some of our workers. We want to give you a better look, commercial, industrial, road building, plant depots, mechanical and electrical, the lot. And we want it done by the end of July, two months.' The research project had just received a take-over bid, only there was no sign of any money coming across.

Paul T was on a short-term research contract. He'd been hired to investigate masculinity in the construction industry. His employers had the idea that the construction industry was the prime locus of masculinity in the work process, and had been from the dawn of history. They also had a theory that History was advancing inevitably to ever greater gender neutrality. Gender neutrality at the workplace was to lead to gender neutrality in society as a whole. Only something had gone badly adrift. Semi-legal, unregulated labour in the construction industry was producing a regression to a more primitive masculinity. It was a revival of cave-man, brute force masculinity. Muscle-culture was obstructing the introduction of new building technology, and getting in the way of advances in productivity. As long as brawn was cheap, backward masculinity reared its ugly head.

Paul T wasn't too crazy about this idea. He didn't think it was particularly polite to talk about the people who built houses, roads, bridges, as having 'degraded' masculinity, or degraded anything else for that matter. But Paul was getting paid and hoped he might dig out some useful stuff about illegal employers on the pretext of talking to illegally employed workers. Personally, he thought that it was all more to do with a massive £4 billion tax scam than regression to an earlier form of masculinity, not unlinked to the fact that construction contractors weighed in heavily every year to Tory Party funds. But that kind of idea was not fashionable enough to get research funds nowadays. Too materialist to attract money.

Markham wanted an answer.

'We would like to see your questionnaire of course, and we might just want to add a few questions ourselves. About employment. How the workers see their future with us. We want to introduce a bit more loyalty. Things can't go on the way they are. And we have to keep in front. So, you see, that's what we like about your project.'

Paul T did not see at all. Markham talked quietly in short sentences which always seemed to leave out the substance. It was as if he was talking about something without wanting to give it a name. His flaccid face said even less. Paul T suddenly felt he was involved in a game of poker—a game which he did not know how to play—rather than interviewing a manager about the operations of Contrac.

Paul stuttered something about 'independence of their research', and 'responsibilities to the charitable institution' that was funding the project. Markham recognized a bluster when he met one and completely ignored it.

'If we give you access to our sites', he said, 'the Board would like a report on what you find. But before you go ahead, they have asked me to get your assurance, in writing, that we have absolute confidentiality. This is a commercially sensitive area we are getting into. You know that. So we need guarantees.'

'All interviewing is confidential and anonymous, to protect ourselves and the companies and individuals we talk to. I can put that in writing, signed by the project leaders. It's normal practice. That will be no problem.'

Paul T heard himself. It sounded like he had agreed to everything without agreeing to anything. One thing was absolutely clear. Contrac were totally unfazed by questions of masculinity. In fact, they seemed to quite like them being asked. So much so that for a moment the thought flashed through Paul's mind that Contrac's 'strategic review' was a plot to undercut cheap illegal male labour with even cheaper illegal female labour. He squashed the idea. It was just too fantastic. Masculinism went too deep. The answer must be in what Markham *wasn't* saying. There had to be something about the way Contrac employed its work-force that worried them. Maybe Contrac wanted him to look into their employment practices, to test out their vulnerability, to see how exposed they were before they got caught out.

'I'd like you to meet Andy Carter', Markham said, 'He's our general manager in Keyturn Labour Agency. He wants to go over your questionnaire with you, before we let you know which sites you go on.'

Paul got up to leave almost automatically, as if obeying an order. He was quite unused to handling this kind of situation. When Markham said, 'I'd like you to', it meant 'You are about to'; and 'Andy Carter wants to go over the questionnaire', meant 'he's been instructed to.' But most of all, he was saying 'we are going to vet your questionnaires before we let you anywhere near one of our workers.' It was the ease with which he dominated that Paul found so disconcerting. His eighth-floor office commanded a view over this East Midlands city, as a simple objective material fact. Markham was the same, only towards people. And he now had more pressing matters at hand than to be visible doing what he was doing: exercising power. Paul did not know then that it was to be the last time he was to actually *see* him.

Going down two floors in the lift, it was already apparent that Andy Carter was at a different proximity to 'the source' than Markham. Andy's suit was just too sharp a blue to be the anonymous clothing for the comfortable exercise of authority. He still dressed to express. And had a beard. When he smiled, he hadn't yet quite learnt the art of concealing his fangs. His North Eastern accent, modified, hinted at the need to struggle to get to the top and a residual pride in the capacity to be hard. The stereotype, in fact. He was also quite unself-consciously indiscreet. Where Markham had been just about as communicative as the Sphinx, Andy just gave it all away.

'You can't ask our building workers who pays their wages,' he said, 'They wouldn't know the answer anyway. This question here. It uses the

word employ. You use it all the time. Don't use that word. Look. Question 21. Does your employer set your hours of work? You can't talk about employer.' Paul sensed that the more naive and green about construction he appeared, the more Andy was going to let drop. So let him run.

'I really can't see what you're worried about,' Paul said. 'These are just perfectly normal questions that anybody could answer. In fact, I've already tried it out lots and lots of times. Nobody seems to have any trouble answering them. They seem pretty straightforward. Like, *'Who gives you instructions?'*, *'When do you go for tea-breaks?'*, and *'Who tells you?'*. It doesn't seem complicated to me.'

'What about this one', Andy said, *'Could you pay anyone to work in your place?'* This could be used as evidence against us.' 'Evidence? What do you mean, evidence?'

And it all came out. Back in the 1980s, Contrac had bought out this labour agency which had supplied self-employed workers to various contractors, including Contrac. Now Contrac had their own in-house labour agency, Keyturn Labour Agency, that exclusively supplied labour to Contrac. But nobody was supposed to know that KLA was owned by Contrac. In fact, KLA was officially owned by another company, which was in turn owned by another, and then another, which was finally owned by Contrac. The whole thing was set up to put Contrac at arm's length from employing people on a semi-legal, self-employed basis. Moreover, KLA forced everyone to go self-employed, gave them no option.

'Either they go self-employed, or they don't work for KLA.' Andy explained, helpfully.

KLA paid no corporation tax on profits, no holidays, no sick pay, no national insurance. Officially all its workers were independent subcontractors. The savings to Contrac amounted to several hundred thousand pounds a year. And KLA could sack its workers without notice, without any come-backs. Being a labour agency, it only supplied labour, didn't employ it. So, it couldn't get screwed for illegal employment. A perfect arrangement, or so Andy thought. And yet, he still did not like those questions. Did not like them at all.

'We're immune', Andy said. 'As a registered labour agency, we could never get done for employing labour illegally.'

'So what's this problem about our questionnaire being used as evidence? Evidence for what?', Paul asked again.

'Well, this little problem's come up at the Bridgethorpe Docks site.' he said, 'A trades union official, Bertie Flynn, a little Mussolini who twists the men round his little finger with his fine words, is taking us to court for dismissing three shop stewards. Claims victimization. But before he does, he's got to prove that they're not really self-employed. We're in the clear ourselves, but Contrac might be at risk. That's the problem.'

'But everyone knows they're not really self-employed', Paul smiled lightly. 'In fact, I thought everyone knows it's sort of illegal, and nobody's particularly bothered. The Inland Revenue are getting all the tax it takes to keep them happy. They're not going to want to do anything about it. Anyway, what's the worry? These questionnaires could

never be used in court. They're anonymous. We don't put names or places to them. And certainly not companies.'

Paul T could hardly believe his luck. So it was Bridgethorpe Docks Contrac was worried about. He knew about it from *Construction News*. It was a major petro-chemical refinery construction project in the North East. There had been two strikes there, both reportedly concerning the extreme insecurity of employment. In the course of six months one contractor had employed four hundred men and got rid of eight hundred. KLA itself had gone through four hundred in employing its workforce of two hundred. But more than that, Paul had already arranged through the main contractor, Universal Technical and Engineering Construction, or UTEC, to go on-site to interview construction workers. Now Andy made it quite clear that Contrac had no intention of letting Paul anywhere near Bridgethorpe in the circumstances. It was their hot spot. So a little cautious disingenuousness was required.

'How do you mean, you're in the clear, but Contrac is at risk?' he asked, 'I thought you were all part of the same company.'

'Well, yes', Andy was plunging ahead regardless, 'but not all the men know that. Bertie Flynn does, for sure. But he's got to prove that Contrac is their employer. He may not be aware of that, but if he does, it could be awkward. That's the danger. We don't want the whole set-up we've built between Contrac and KLA unraveling before our eyes.'

Paul T could scarcely believe what he was hearing, and wondered why Andy was telling this to him. Here was a general manager of a subsidiary of Contrac actually boasting that his lifeboat was going to float even if the ship went down. It didn't make sense. Markham had been so careful not to say what Andy was now blurting out.

The rest of the interview with Andy went as smooth as clockwork. Paul got the whole rundown on the history of KLA. Heard about how it kept a confidential database of twelve thousand workers it could call on in different regions whenever a new contract started up. Got a recruitment form which showed how workers taken on by KLA had to call themselves subcontractors. How they signed up to having no employment rights.

Andy was more than helpful about all the questions to do with masculinity. Questions about male and female spaces on construction sites. In fact, although he recognized that, against company policy, porn was to be found plastering the walls of nearly all the workers' huts, he didn't mind those questions. There was no risk attached. He didn't even object to the research going into some detail on this. On how men used nude pictures of women as dart-boards. Or what the men would think of doing the same in front of their wives and daughters in their front living rooms. Or their sons for that matter. He suggested that Paul ask the men a bit more about how they responded to Contrac 'employing women as chainmen'. Women as chainmen! Nice one. He said as part of Contrac's equal opportunities policy, women were being used more and more as surveyors' assistants, whereas in the past men would hardly come across women on site all day long. He said it was 'an integral aspect of CII' (a Continuous Improvement Initiative he helpfully explained when Paul looked blank) to bring about a more gender-neutral working environment.

On the train back from Peterborough to London, Paul tapped out his

impressions of the visit to Contrac HQ on his notebook. He'd never been that sold on the idea of the neutrality of scientific research, but this was something else. Both the investigation and what was being investigated were shifting about—being shifted—all over the place. It was more as if he was entering a web of power, and he certainly did not have all the protection he might need. The weirdest thing about it was that a company that had gone to all the trouble of disguising its ownership of KLA with three layers of companies in between, was now spilling the beans to a complete stranger. And he was being invited further into the web, without, as far as he knew, any checks on his background.

Episode 2: Heading North

Contrac contacted Paul a few days later with a list of sites to visit. Bridgethorpe Docks, of course, was not among them. But Paul had already got an 'in' there. He was a bit surprised that everything was still full steam ahead. The written guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity had been given. But, in spite of Andy, there were no alterations required to those sensitive questions on legality of employment. Contrac must want to know how KLA men would answer them to see what kind of risk they were running. They just didn't want to be seen to be asking. That had to be what Markham was after, and maybe Carter deliberately hadn't been put in the picture. It was risk assessment, and Carter might be part of the risk.

A few days later, Paul was heading up the M1 to a stretch of new motorway under construction north of Leicester. The weather was baking. His back was stuck to his shirt which was stuck to the car seat. The fan only seemed to pump in more and more hot air. Paul spent an hour or more driving around looking for a B&B, getting caught up in the tangle of new road works, old power stations, and industrially exhausted landscape. It thundered. But only a few heavy drops of rain fell.

The next morning, short of sleep, he put on his disguise for the site investigation. This disguise business, especially in this weather, was a very sticky matter. For visits like those to Contrac HQ, it was relatively simple. You just put on your best suit, and hoped you weren't wearing the same tie as the first time you went there. To go on site, Paul wore a crisp light blue shirt, a pair of well-pressed dark grey strides, and a never-in-fashion, never-out-of fashion conservative grey-brown tweed jacket. And his other tie. The difficulty was to balance what to wear for the management interviews and the worker interviews. Mind you, management were always more easily deceived by appearances than workers. Workers had come across too many shits in shirts to bother about what someone wore. For site management, it was important, no, necessary, to dress subordinate and to avoid giving any impression of being a union-loving academic.

Paul T found his way to the Contrac main compound. He had a meet with Andy Carter at the KLA recruitment hut next to the compound entrance. Paul had wondered why Carter had insisted on being there. It hadn't happened on any other sites he'd been to. He wondered even more when he learnt that Carter had driven 180 miles from his Norfolk home

before planning later to drive back to the Peterborough HQ for the only purpose of saying 'Hallo, good morning', and introducing him to the Contrac project manager. Having rattled through the interview with the Contrac manager who made it quite plain that he thought all KLA men should really be directly employed by Contrac, and legally, Paul found Carter still waiting. They got into his Vauxhall Carlton, and Paul was driven to East Compound. Carter explained that he now wanted to introduce him to a KLA foreman, Jack Dart.

Jack was nowhere about. Carter opened the car windows, and shouted to another KLA foreman, John, who slowly strolled over.

'Jack went out five minutes ago. He should be back soon, he was just taking some stuff up to the lads on 312 structure.'

Andy was visibly irritated at the less than smooth hand-over.

'But there something you should know, Andy,' said John, ignoring Paul's presence or thinking he was just 'with' Andy, 'Reeds are poaching our men over on central section, and the site agent on East Division has brought in his own agency labour. Fixers from T.L. Raymans.'

'Well, you know what to do, John', said Andy enhancing his reputation for indiscretion, 'Poach some back. Send a shot across their bows. Make them think twice about doing it again. And as for Raymans, leave it with me. I can soon put a stop to that.'

'What was all that about Raymans?', inquired Paul airily when John left. Paul's self-appointed 'controller' was still evidently not fully in control of himself. He vented anger and irritation. 'Oh, you know, the construction industry. These bloody site agents we've got. They get used to a standard of living. Cases of whisky. Weekends in Paris. Helicopters to race tracks with a wad in an envelope for betting with. We've tried to cut it out, but you just end up chasing your tail. You'll never get rid of it. They just look at it as part of their salary. I'll tell the project manager, of course. It's up to him. He knows about it already, and tried to stop it.'

At that moment, Jack Dart appeared. Or rather, a Toyota 4x4 hi-flat back stopped in a cloud of dust with Jack somewhere in it. Carter passed Paul on to Jack. His handler for the day. Then he left on his way back to Contrac HQ, mission accomplished. Jack was to decide where Paul was to go, who he was to talk to, and for how long. Paul was completely dependent on him for getting about. The problem of interviewing construction workers on a 23 mile stretch of new motorway was that they were strung out, clustered around what they called simply 'structures', which could be a bridge, a culvert, a sump, or anything else in reinforced concrete. But at least Paul was to get to talk to KLA men.

Jack was called Dart, came from Devon, spoke very very little, gave away even less. The perfect handler, in fact. He also drove beyond the speed limit where there were no speed limits. He took Paul to one structure, shouted orders, dropped off materials, and then careered on a couple of miles, weaving up the dried mud, deep-rutted, twenty-three-mile scar between the headlong rush of on-coming dumpers, diggers, graders. No place for chickens. Over the intercom came a continuous stream of messages from the KLA recruitment hut. 'Did he want a pair of steel-fixers from Nottingham.' 'Take them. Send them to 415.' 'What about a shuttering carpenter who worked on Canary Wharf. Seems OK.'

'What's his name?...Don't want him'. Occasionally, Jack would initiate it himself. 'Get me some scaffolders for 186 structure can you'. The answer must have been no, the question was repeated at intervals throughout the day.

As Paul's head hit the roof of the Toyota cab for the nth time, the idea struck him that he was finding out more about what he wanted to know by mistake, than through his carefully prepared questionnaires. Poaching, Raymans, and this totally anarchic on-the-hoof recruitment. And plenty of masculine activity. Tough men, tough times. And he hadn't yet seen a single chainman-woman.

Off to another structure. This time a bridge. Jack dumped Paul and sped off. No explanations or introductions. There was nothing for it, but just to go up to a gang of carpenters working on some shuttering. The heat and humidity were stifling. Thunder flies were swarming over naked backs, faces and, later, questionnaires. Paul went through the business. No question about these KLA men. They were all so-called self-employed. It was a complete farce. Here on a major construction site, £80 million worth of road, technically everyone was their own independent sub-contractor. All four hundred of them. They had signed the KLA form which said so. They talked tax-code themselves, the men. They were '7145' or 'SC60s' depending on whether they paid their tax themselves, or whether KLA stopped it out of their money. They all knew that KLA was really a front for Contrac and said they were employed by Contrac. Paid by the shift, no holidays, no sick pay. Some of them paid no insurance. Worked a sixty-hour week, no overtime.

Most of all, they spoke of the insecurity of employment. The men all called it 'the flick of the finger': instant dismissal.

'You get the flick of the finger. Just like that. You're out. Finished. Gone.' The question on what period of notice they got was treated with mirth and derision.

At lunch break, half-hour, unpaid, they asked Paul into their cabin, which was by then more like an oven, and gave him a cup of tea out of a flask. Once inside, the questionnaire routine behind them, they exploded.

'You want to know what the construction industry is like now? I worked three weeks for a subby. Asked him for my SC60 tax receipt. He told me to fucking get lost. Just like that. You pay tax. But does it ever get to the Inland Revenue. Does it fuck!'

Another: 'I worked one year solid for this geezer. Paid out £1,200 in tax on the SC60. The fucker then declared himself a bankrupt. Easy done. Turned up somewhere else with a different name. Then the Revenue came after me. I'm only just getting straightened up now. They took me to court so I had to cough up the £1,200 twice. Dirty bastards.'

And another: 'I was working down this sump-hole for three weeks. Hard graft, water up to my knees. When the job was finished, I went for my pay. Nothing. Fucking nothing. I'm already on this GBH ticket, so there wasn't a lot I could do. Anyway, my dad was with me, and told me No. So I got my mates to go round his house. He finished up three weeks in hospital, same as I'd spent down his bloody hole. But I never got no money.'

'It happened to me that. Subby just laughed at me when I went for my last week's wages. "I never pay for the last week's work", he said. "Against my principles." Fucking principles!'

At that point, the Toyota trailing a dust storm appeared from the distance. A Dart in a dash.

'What a dogger him', one of them said, 'always on the hurry-up. I just look straight through him. Just like he's not there. It's the only way to treat fuckers like him. He drives himself mad, never mind anyone else.'

Off to the next structure. This time it was a gang of steel-fixers, all 'self-employed' and directly under Contrac supervision. No pretences: Contrac's tax-scam in living flesh, weaving vast trellises of Contrac steel bar. Paul was trying to speed up the interviews. It was already four o'clock. Thunder clouds were developing, and he could see the dance of lightning towards the West Section, where it must already have been raining. It was a real display, the kind that happens when a long hot spell breaks. By the time Jack came along with the Toyota, the first drops of rain were falling, and the gap between fork lightning and thunder clap was down to a couple of seconds. With all that steel around sticking out of the ground, it was no place to be, certainly no place to be out working.

Jack drove Paul back to the KLA recruitment hut. By that time it was lashing down. Jack was driving around, checking on which men were still working, and who had 'cabined-up'. The structures were deserted.

'It's the self-employed system,' he shouted over the thunder, 'The self-employed system... They don't work, they don't get paid.' In a nutshell, and for him, it was a lengthy explanation. Twentieth-century motorway construction robbery: your money or your life.

By the time they were getting near the main compound, the mud-track had become an ice-rink. Jack didn't stop darting, except now mostly sideways.

'You've certainly picked up some extra driving skills.' Paul commented amicably after they narrowly missed a two-ton dumper on one side and a ditch on the other.

'Met police skid pan', Jack grinned. Probably his first joke of the day. Or not, as the case may be.

On his way back to the B&B, Paul took in a Tandoori in town. He couldn't stop thinking of himself madly brushing flies off the questionnaires. His pen had been running them over they were so thick. But did the investigation really lie in the answers to those questions? What the hell had Carter wanted him to see—or not see? Why had he gone to such trouble to control what happened, assigning him a handler, when the reality of the site was so out of control, his, or it seemed, anyone else's? Normal wage labour for those men in the hut had virtually ceased to exist. Contrac had set up KLA as an attempt to organize the chaos. Instead, they'd become part of it. The idea that Carter could control what Paul was going to find out was like thinking he could control the weather. The thunderstorm had exposed it all. 'It's the self-employed system', Jack had shouted, the one given to say nothing.

Paul drifted uneasily off to sleep that night, the storm had passed but

had done nothing to dispel the still humidity. Slipping away, the sound of the flick of the finger in his head.

Episode 3: To Bridgethorpe Docks

Finding a B&B turned out to be even more of a problem here than on the Leicester motorway investigation. The Bridgethorpe Docks site was massive. A £530 million petro-chemical complex being built for Unicem. Unicem had also decided to combine it with their own power-generating plant. Since the privatization of electricity, it was no longer worth buying power off the electricity companies. So they would generate their own. A kind of privatization of privatization. Then, along with the site, there was quite a lot of road construction. As a result all accommodation was packed out with construction workers, site managers, engineers. Eventually, Paul found a B&B in a farmhouse overlooking the site from a distance. Every available room had been converted into a bedroom. His was in a blocked-off corridor, the remaining rooms taken by a gang of steel riggers.

The site had already been going eighteen months. Betty Pendleton ran the B&B side of the farm, and they were building a new house with the proceeds. She welcomed the money but also looked forward to the return of American tourists coming to admire the castle up the coast.

'The whole area has been transformed since they started coming here over a year ago,' she said. 'The Swan Hotel at Bridgethorpe's made a fortune taking men in. They started doing evening meals. It was so successful they opened it up to locals. Completely renovated the place. Two weeks ago, the locals were looking at how much the men were getting on their plates. Then they actually started counting the Brussels sprouts. And before you knew it, the whole place was wrecked. The local paper called it the battle of the Brussels. It's turned the place upside down. We'll miss the money when it's all finished. But at least it'll be that bit quieter.'

Paul T had an appointment that afternoon on site with Jimmy Farloe, the Industrial Relations Manager for UTEC. But before travelling up, he had already had several calls with Bertie Flynn, the construction-union organizer, taking great care not to say too much over the phone. A meeting had been set up for that evening, several miles up the coast in Eastleigh. Bertie had fixed for three shop stewards involved in the strikes to be there, men who worked for KLA and the other big labour agency on site, Yorktown, known as 'Yorkies', like the chocolate bar. For everybody's sake, Paul and Bertie had taken every precaution to keep the meeting and its location completely secret. For Paul, the danger was that Contrac would get to hear of it, which would blow the rest of his research on their sites out of the water. It was also his own bit of freelancing. His research leaders had best know nothing of it, and it wasn't going to have that much to do with masculinity. Well, not directly. For the men, they risked their jobs. They had the most to lose. And for Bertie that would mean destroying the union organization on site which he had carefully built up over months. Organizing casual, illegally employed labour was the most difficult. Especially when there had been a 200 per cent turnover of labour in six months. A false move, and it could all be wasted.

Paul T drove up to the site, stopped the car before going in, and looked. Great steel structures stood seventy metres high, with tiny yellow safety jackets dotted all over them. A concrete reservoir, the size of a football pitch and fifteen metres high, was surrounded by seven stern uncompromising solid concrete blocks. And between all these structures there was a lattice-work of gleaming steel pipes, all diameters. If the construction workers, 1,200 of them, were made to look small by what they were erecting, Paul felt uncomfortably belittled by it. He was getting an ant's eye view of the anthill. And being an outside investigator, a foreign ant too. He knew what usually happened to them.

At the security gate, there were the normal identity checks. He collected his numbered visitor's tag, which had to be displayed at all times and relinquished on exit. He parked up, and went to UTEC reception. A woman receptionist, picked for looks, was there to usher men into the men's world. Secretaries and clerical staff passed her by invisibly.

Jimmy Farloe was a pugnacious little man with a not so little belly and a snub nose. While explaining to Paul that UTEC did not employ any workers on site, there was a constant stream of phone calls to him about a piss-up on a barge somewhere in Bridgethorpe that night. It was clearly one of the more important functions of an Industrial Relations Manager to arrange such out-of-hours male-bonding sessions, although Paul wondered why it was necessary when they spent all day together anyway. But a concrete block had just been topped out, so it was necessary. Farloe called it 'building team spirit'.

UTEC was just contract management. Below them there was another layer of contract management, and then a whole chain of subcontractors before you got to a subcontractor that actually employed any construction workers. What's more, one half of the site, the steel structures mainly, was union-organized, all directly employed, sometimes by UTEC subsidiaries. The other side, known as the 'civils' from civil engineering, did all the groundwork and concrete structures. This side was the jungle. The place where KLA and Yorkies hung out.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in total frustration. What with Farloe fending off droves of thirsty men from a barge which must already have been in danger of sinking, and fruitless negotiations with sub-sub-sub-contractors to set up interviews, Paul T was getting nowhere. He couldn't make up his mind how much of this was deliberate obstruction and how much reflected Farloe's own limited capacity to get things organized. Control had been sub-contracted along with everything else. One thing was clear. Farloe had no handle on the 'civils'. They were a law unto themselves. Whether by accident or design, Paul was not going to get near KLA or Yorkies through him.

UTEC had some control over the engineering side, mainly through its subsidiaries. But even there, every arrangement seemed to be some kind of a deal. An exchange of promises or favours given or received. UTEC also had some leverage on two smaller packages of work on the civils, the building of the administration and management blocks, known as 'the chicken huts' for their diminutive scale compared with the rest of the

project; and the river-outlet works. Paul T thought his best chance of getting a view of the jungle from the inside would be the river-outlet works. So negotiations began. And, by six, when Farloe's tongue was already hanging out and almost reaching his belly, they had got precisely nowhere. Paul uneasily felt he was being sucked into a maze, and after four hours, did not know why or by whom. Or whether he would get out of it with anything.

He drove morosely away from the site, changed out of disguise into normal clothes back at the B&B, and headed off for Eastleigh. He hadn't eaten all day, so stopped at a pub on the way for a pint and some pork chops dissolved in some kind of brown amalgam dotted with lumps of yellowish green mush. Don't start trying to identify sprouts, he thought. It could mean trouble.

According to Bertie's instructions, the working-man's club where the secret meeting was to take place was behind the steelyard, in the back-streets of Eastleigh. After half an hour, Paul had got so badly lost that he would have shaken off any tail even without intending to. He stopped a man on a bicycle. The Steelyard was a pub, of course. He should have known. Paul reversed the car, and retraced his way back to where the man had said, did a few more lefts and rights, and found himself in front of a typical, functional, clubhouse.

He walked in. It was virtually empty. He got himself a drink, and noticed two men eyeing him closely, one about forty-five, the other much younger. Construction workers. Paul hesitated, then chose safety and sat down some distance away. He was the one who struck out like a sore thumb. Best to let them recognize him. But no-one moved. Bertie came in about ten minutes later, spotted Paul immediately, came over and introduced himself. Only then did the two men come over, followed by a third who had been sitting by himself, unnoticed. Dick, John and Terry.

They were all pretty suspicious, almost hostile. What was it that Paul wanted to know? What was in it for him? What were they going to get out of talking to Paul? What was Paul going to do with what they told him? Questions to which there were no answers, or at least none that would allay all suspicion that here was someone making a career out of their predicament. Bertie smoothed things over. So long as Paul was with Bertie, it would be OK.

John, from KLA, was the first to begin to tell Paul what it was like on site.

'If you wanted a Saturday off for anything, tough shit. You got the tap on the shoulder. One bloke had to go to the doctor. Tap on the shoulder. They got rid of two hundred men like that. It was like a revolving door, in one moment, out the next.' A silent movie image flicked across Paul's mind. The physical gesture. Tap. The departure.

'Before our strike', said Dick, the older man, Irish and one of the two Yorkies, 'it was even worse with us. One bright blue and sunny morning, there were these six shuttering carpenters waiting for a lorry with all their gear. The bastard foreman sacked the lot of them, just like that. They all got the tap. For not fucking working! They do it just for the intimidation.'

These workers were all self-employed, labourers, concrete gangs,

steel-fixers, shutterers. Seven hundred of them, counting both KLA and Yorkies. Mostly SC60s.

'When I got elected steward,' John said, 'they completely isolated me, stuck me on a dumper clearing muck at the far end of the site. They cut my sixty hours down to thirty-nine a week, and my rate from £5.50 to £5.00 dead. I've got a wife and two kids. What can you do with £150 a week take home and a mortgage. It's just about OK if you do the sixty hours. I lasted out for three weeks, and had to fucking jack. I just couldn't live on it. I've got a job with this other local subby now, £4.25 an hour, but at least I get six full shifts, and the occasional Sunday.'

'Same thing happened to me with Yorkies', Terry, the most aggressive one chipped in, a young bloke, early twenties. 'When I got elected steward they stuck me down a sump hole on my own for three days. I've lost my wife, my house and my car. They just cut my rate.'

He now stayed with his mates, and drove sixty miles each way to work everyday. Paul took in the bald statement of facts, which was thrown at him like a challenge. What have you got to say about that then?

They told Paul about the strikes. Both of them had been about the tap on the shoulder situation. Yorkies, with four hundred men, had been the most successful. The men had been solid, and got the support of the crane drivers, which more or less brought the whole site to a standstill. At least, they now knew a week before they went down the road, and they got overtime rates if they worked more than forty-five hours a week. The KLA strike had been less effective. Some ex-Contrac men had been filtered in with the local recruits, and most of them had carried on working. They got better rates, anyway. The strike had started when thirty men had been given the tap, but fizzled out after about a week. On going back to work, the union had been promised that the thirty would be the first taken back in if KLA started recruiting again. KLA did. But the men weren't taken back. And KLA men still worked the six ten-hour shifts, no overtime. They were at least now notified of redundancies. And as the job was being scaled down, they were notified quite often. So more of a wave bye-bye than a tap on the shoulder.

As they were leaving, Dick said 'I'll lay down my life for my men.' Paul suspected it wouldn't come to that. Bertie kept a cool determination of knowing that he would be starting all over again on some other site, and that even such small achievements in those circumstances were exceptional. All evening, they had consumed one orange juice, two pints, and a half of shandy between them.

Paul arrived back at the B&B gone eleven. But by the time he was up at seven next morning, the riggers had already gone. They probably wouldn't have appreciated being grilled over their sausage, bacon and eggs anyway. Paul got to Jimmy Farloe's office by eight, and Jimmy turned up about quarter of an hour later breathing Bacardi and coke. Two cups of black instant coffee, each with two heaped spoons of granules, restored his pugnacity. Or maybe it was the mixture of a sore head and the time of day.

He looked at Paul straight in the face, his eyes suddenly well-focused. Then he sprung.

'Enjoy your trip to Eastleigh last night?'

Paul looked at Farloe straight in the face. Had to.

'You met Bertie Flynn last night. That was my information.'

Now was not the time to flinch.

'I don't know Bertie Flynn. I know who he is of course. But I've never met him in my life.' Surprisingly, Paul's voice sounded quite calm. Farloe kept eye-balling.

'You met him. Last night. In Eastleigh. That was my information.' Farloe punched out the accusation again.

'Well, your information was wrong then, wasn't it?'

The phone rang. It was one of the contractors that Paul was to go to. Saved by the bell, as they say. Arrangements were made, and Farloe told Paul where to go. The Eastleigh meeting was never referred to again.

Finding his way through Portakabin city where there were no street signs gave Paul time to collect his thoughts. Both of them knew that Paul had been lying, and both knew that they knew. Perhaps naturally Paul first asked himself, How the hell did he know? He ran through the possibilities, rapidly realizing that there were too many. Private security phone taps. On Bertie? On Paul himself?—unlikely. One of the three stewards was a snitch? Not the one from KLA, that was the least probable, as he no longer worked for them and wasn't on site. So at least there might not be a direct line to Contrac. But the other two? He thought back to last night, searching for clues, and ended up dismissing the possibility. He was absolutely confident of Bertie, although it hadn't stopped him from making inquiries about him through political contacts before he went to Bridgethorpe. Or had Farloe rifled through Paul's briefcase yesterday afternoon? Paul wracked his brain to remember whether he had the opportunity, and whether Paul had inadvertently left some piece of paper with Bertie's name on it in his case. He thought he had been careful, and he now had no time to check it over again. And anyway, this possibility was too unrealistic. The idea of Farloe rifling through his briefcase *before* having any cause for suspicion told Paul he needed to get his creeping paranoia under control.

So he switched to thinking about how much Farloe knew—or could know. He'd been out on the piss all last night. There was enough evidence of that. By the state of him, it seemed unlikely that he'd already had a report back that morning. So maybe he didn't know about the KLA and Yorktown men. Perhaps he only knew about Bertie being there? The great advantage of Paul's instant denial was that he'd revealed nothing more. The disadvantage was that Farloe hadn't either.

But finally he arrived at the real question. Why did Farloe tell him that he knew? After all, the shrewd move would have been to say nothing and just stop Paul in every way possible from getting near illegals on site. Was it maybe even a friendly warning? After all Paul knew that UTBC was not at all happy the way Contrac and Yorktown operated. Then Paul stopped looking for reasons. It was probably Bacardi and coke and a sore head that made Farloe talk. He decided to try to carry on regardless, as if nothing had happened, and control the haze of paranoia that surrounded his every move from then on.

The rest of the morning was spent interviewing managers and men on the

engineering construction side. A piece of cake. All directly employed. All legal and above board. Nationally agreed rates, union members. And all the managers deployed the bone-crusher handshake to which you had to react instantly by applying equal and opposite force if you wanted to retrieve your hand in one piece. Paul, not normally into ethological explanations of human behaviour, thought that even a troupe of male baboons had more sophisticated means of non-verbal communication. The first part of the afternoon carried on much the same, with Paul intermittently continuing attempts to get access at least to the river-outlet works. One thing turned up in the interviews which put a dent in the inevitable-march-of-History-to-gender-neutrality thesis. Some of the legals, highly skilled, mechanical fitters were 'travellers'. They went round the world with UTEC, working on the global infrastructure of nuclear-power stations, refineries, suspension bridges, airports. They were not just gender-segregated from 8 AM to 6 PM, but for most of their lives. A fitter with a strong Northern Ireland accent went home into 'mixed gender space' once in six months. 'We are the high-tech tinkers of the twentieth century', he said, with a twinkle in his eye.

Finally persistence paid off. Farloe told him he could see Holt's, the firm doing the piling on the river works. Paul made his way to their hut and met Paul. Paul Newman in fact. And it wasn't quite clear whether he had the name because he had the looks or the looks because he had the name. Paul T ran through the Holt operations with him. Newman's steel blue but lying eyes assured him that all his men were straight-up, legal, bona fide. He handed him over to his safety man to take him out to the estuary for the interviews.

Paul T got into the Landrover, and the safety man asked him who he wanted to see.

'SC60s.'

'No problem.'

And off they went, a mile or more, beyond the site perimeter and out to the estuary. He was dropped, and the Landrover turned back into the site, past a security gate. In a small hut, sitting on tool boxes, Paul T interviewed a dumper-driver and a pile-hand. They confirmed that the whole gang were 'self-employed', worked seventy to eighty hours a week, shift rates. And the same bitter replies to questions on security of employment.

Once the interviewing was complete, Paul went back to the gate. He couldn't get back on site. The security man in his little wooden hut stared at the river from seven in the morning until eight at night, nothing but Cleveland Radio for company, letting the tide go in and out, and no one in the gate without an authorized pass. Paul had to wait for the safety man. The security man called him up on the radio. No sign. The haze of paranoia began to thicken.

'It's a traffic jam on site', the security man said after three quarters of an hour.

Paul didn't believe him. Just did not believe him.

Forced into contemplative mode, Paul rekindled a private rant about postmodern philosophy. He wasn't at that safe philosophical distance

from the action to see his own investigation as *just* engaged in playfully redescribing reality. These investigations weren't philosophical, and they couldn't stop at linguistic analysis, or dissections of discourses. At that precise moment, he felt he was more likely to be inscribed in some concrete foundation, than able to enjoy the freedom to redescribe its economic and social underpinnings. His own seeking of knowledge was too constrained by this social reality for him to construe it. He felt the business of knowing this reality was more like being in a *rapport de force*, and most of the time he was at the wrong end of it. He found himself in a web of power, and his investigation put him in a most peculiar relation to it—one that was stopping him getting back to where he wanted to go. Fuck philosophy, he thought. It didn't need a philosopher to transcendently posit reality. It was more likely to posit itself on Paul without that kind of help.

Paul wandered up and down outside the gate. Then he saw. There *was* a traffic jam. 'It happens every day', the security man said.

'It could last an hour, even two.'

Paul could see his Landrover with its flashing-mocking yellow light stuck in the middle of the gridlock. Farloe explained when Paul eventually got back. If a subcontractor had a trench to dig across the main thoroughfare, he dug it. If another needed a crane to off-load steel from a place which got in everybody else's way, he did so. And more often than not, just left the crane there, if he did not have his own particular reason to move it. No-one was in control. The traffic jam was just the effect of a more general economic disorder. It was this disorder that had been stopping Paul from finding out more about the disorder. Nothing personal. Or so he told himself, trying once more to dispel the paranoia.

Farloe was even quite friendly at the end of the day. Talked about himself. Told Paul about how he had got into industrial relations from being in the Royal Engineers. How in his first week at it, he had locked out 1,200 men, and broken a strike. How alone and heroic he'd walked straight through a mass picket. Paul gathered up his pile of completed questionnaires, said farewell to Farloe, and got into his dark blue G Reg vw Golf.

A few miles down the road, Paul parked up in a lay-by, shifted into the passenger seat, plugged his notebook into the car battery, and started to tap out his impressions of the last couple of days. The meeting at Eastleigh. Being ambushed by Farloe. Paul Newman's eyes. The traffic jam. Maybe what he couldn't find out told him more about what he wanted to find out than what he had found out. Neat, he thought, but not quite right. He had certainly uncovered Contrac's weak points, right up to and including Carter. But an uneasy feeling began to physically creep all over him that that was exactly what Contrac wanted. Oh, well! At least this time there were no dead bodies floating down the estuary, his in particular. Suddenly he felt wiped out. He was just staring at the pulsing cursor on screen, and it wasn't going anywhere. His thoughts were too scrambled to string into sentences. So Paul quit *Word*.

He climbed back into the driver's seat, and headed home, thinking, 'Is this economics? Is this sociology?'

And then, 'Is this what I get paid for?' But from his mouth the words that jumped out loud into the cocoon of the car were, 'Flick of the finger.' 'Tap on the shoulder.'

In this account only the names, locations, and occasionally the work-processes have been changed in order to protect people's identity and respect confidentiality. For the same reason, the author must also remain anonymous. Facts (for example, about Brussels sprouts) and figures (such as those relating to wages and employment) are accurately represented. Two main considerations governed the choice of the thriller genre to describe this investigative process. Firstly, the thriller has often taken advantage of a realist apparel. Secondly, the reality of what happened to Paul T approached the fictional genre, much more than the other way around. So a 'true story'.

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Misreading Gorz

André Gorz's work has been described as 'pop sociology', 'journalistic impressionism', and 'sociological punditry'. He has been accused of both 'bourgeois individualism' and 'backward-looking romanticism'. Depending on the critic, Gorz is an erstwhile 'quasi-Stalinist' or a reformed 'anti-Stalinist', an advocate of 'postmodern politics' or simply an 'intellectual charlatan'.

My intention here is to demonstrate that Gorz is widely misrepresented and significantly misunderstood. The poor reception of his ideas in Britain stands in stark contrast to the popularity of Gorz's work on the Continent, where in many countries the issue of reduced working hours is firmly on the political agenda as a means for tackling unemployment. A dissident intellectual who has rarely allied himself with any academic school or political wing, Gorz is talked about far more than he is actually read. Too reformist for orthodox Marxists and too radical for the liberal Left, his independence from established doctrines has won him more critics than friends.

I have not attempted an exegesis of Gorz's work, and assume the reader is familiar with Gorz's best-known book, *Farewell to the Working Class*, and aware that Gorz advocates a redistribution of work and a staged reduction in working time. To briefly summarize, Gorz's socialism is a 'dual society', divided between a sphere of heteronomy and a sphere of autonomy, with the former subordinated to the latter. Heteronomy implies functional rationality, the functional regulation of conduct and the functional integration of individuals. Hetero-regulated integration—what Habermas refers to as 'a non-normative regulation of individual decisions that extends beyond the actors' consciousnesses'¹—enables people to accomplish things that, as individuals, they can neither will nor often understand. It co-ordinates their behaviour by referring beyond their subjective preferences, norms and motivations to the imperatives of a pre-established organization. Autonomy, on the other hand, implies the social integration of individuals. Socially-integrated conduct is self-regulated by individuals who co-ordinate the attainment of common goals by consensus. The distinction between heteronomy and autonomy corresponds to Habermas's theory of the 'uncoupling' of 'system'—comprising economic and administrative subsystems—and 'lifeworld'.

Heteronomy and Freedom

The most common misrepresentation of Gorz depicts his notion of heteronomous work as a sphere of total alienation that is inescapably dehumanizing and oppressive, precluding all possibility of enjoyment, interest, collaboration or initiative. For example, Berger and Kostede write that, "The image of the factory as a hell of self-alienation with no hope for change is part of Gorz's depiction of a "dual society".² Sayers offers a similar picture, stating that, in *Farewell to the Working Class* and *Paths to Paradise*, 'employment was portrayed as an entirely negative phenomenon'. 'In modern industrial conditions, it cannot be a satisfying or self-realizing activity: it cannot be humanized, it is necessarily and ineliminably alienating'.³ The apparent depth of this alienation has provoked an ardent response. Gorz's critics reply that his dual society 'cannot be stabilized unless elements of autonomy and free activity are introduced into the "realm of necessity"';⁴ that 'capitalist control of the labour process conflicts with limited but necessary worker autonomy in production';⁵ that 'subjectivity in production cannot be altogether eliminated' and that, 'It is on this that labour can ground its liberation strategies'.⁶ In Byrne's view 'Gorz denies subjective autonomy and innovative capacity to the working class', and 'he ignores the nature and effects of struggles in reproduction and the contribution these have made to the contemporary crisis'.⁷ Whitbread concurs: 'Gorz's view is that modern

¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, Cambridge 1987, p. 117.

² Johannes Berger and Norbert Kostede, 'Review of *Farewell to the Working Class*', *Telos*, no. 51, Spring 1982, p. 231.

³ Sean Sayers, 'Gorz on Work and Liberation', *Radical Philosophy*, no. 58, Summer 1991, p. 16.

⁴ Berger and Kostede, 'Review of *Farewell*', p. 232.

⁵ Geoff Hodgson, *The Democratic Economy*, Harmondsworth 1984, p. 190.

⁶ Berger and Kostede, 'Review of *Farewell*', p. 231.

⁷ David Byrne, 'A Rejection of André Gorz's *Farewell to the Working Class*', *Capital and Class*, no. 24, Winter 1985, pp. 77, 82.

industry *cannot* be organized democratically. For him, the logic of its technology requires top-down co-ordination and discipline as a condition for efficiency'.⁸

What is most remarkable is that this interpretation can only be maintained by disregarding the preface to *Farewell to the Working Class*. This statement of intent explicitly contradicts the vulgar readings offered by Gorz's critics:

It is certainly possible to 'self-manage' workshops or to self-determine working conditions or to co-determine the design of machines and the definition of tasks. Yet as a whole these remain no less determined in a heteronomous way by the social process of production or, in other words, by society insofar as it is itself a giant machine. Workers' control (erroneously equated with workers' self-management) amounts in reality to self-determining the modalities of what has already been heteronomously determined: the workers will share and define tasks within the framework of an already existing social division of labour.⁹

Gorz is not arguing that pleasure, interest, discretion and co-operation are incompatible with heteronomous work: 'Heteronomy does not mean that the workplace has to be a hell or a purgatory'.¹⁰ What he is rejecting is the ambition to reconcile the differentiation of life and work, culture and technique, social integration and functional integration which capitalist modernity has engendered. Technical specialization and a spatial division of labour, often spanning different continents, means that, even if workers were able to abolish the technical and social (hierarchical) division of labour in the enterprise, the self-management of productive units could not be extended to incorporate control over the final product. This is because its design is ultimately determined by the specifications of other industrial sectors in the production chain, and more remotely by the heterogeneous demands of anonymous consumers. In this context, it is impossible for the social organization of production to be understood and experienced by all individuals as the universally intended result of their voluntary co-operation.

The need to minimize the sphere of heteronomy is not, therefore, 'based on the assumption that Taylorization has become universal'.¹¹ Gorz repeatedly stresses the interpenetration of heteronomous and autonomous spheres, the need to improve working conditions and make work as fulfilling and democratic as possible. Just as the separation of spheres allows people to see their work not as spontaneous self-realization but as a clearly demarcated external necessity taking up—in a society of disposable time—a small portion of their lives, so they are also 'free to seek personal fulfilment in and through socialized labour. And nothing prevents them from attaching equal importance to their socially determined and their autonomous activities'.¹²

⁸ Chris Whitehead, 'Gorz, Now, Hodgson: The Economics of Socialism', *Capital and Class*, no. 26, Summer 1985, p. 139 *his italics*.

⁹ Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class*, trans. Michael Sonenscher, London 1982, p. 9.

¹⁰ Gorz, *Paths to Paradise*, trans. Malcolm Imrie, London 1985, p. 51.

¹¹ Berger and Kortede, 'Review of *Farewell*', p. 231.

¹² Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 98.

Autonomy in Work

Such passages show how *Farewell to the Working Class* has been misread. In *Paths to Paradise*, published three years later, Gorz restates his position:

Heteronomous work is the inevitable outcome of socialization of the productive process, itself made necessary by the quantity and diversity of knowledge and techniques which go into individual products... This does not mean that heteronomy necessarily implies oppression and domination, boredom and/or exploitation. But it does necessarily imply the absence of individual control over the kinds of skill required and the overall purpose of collective work, and thus a degree of alienation.¹³

In *Critique of Economic Reason*, Gorz warns that his conception of a dual society 'runs counter to the argument certain hasty readers have attributed to me, according to which there would be a clear-cut opposition between the two spheres'.¹⁴ Once again, Gorz insists that heteronomous work 'may contain—where it is co-operative, self-organized and self-managed—dimensions of autonomy which make it more fulfilling and pleasing'.¹⁵ The 'post-Fordist' reskilling of work 'considerably *reduces* the degree of heteronomy which characterized the fragmented labour of Taylorism. However, it does not *eliminate* this heteronomy, *it displaces it*'.¹⁶ In other words, while workers may establish a degree of autonomy and collective decision-making on the shop floor, the goals of the work group or productive unit remain functionally regulated by the wider imperatives of the economic system. 'The members of these groups enjoy an appreciable margin of autonomy and scope for initiative but this is still autonomy *in* work, not *of* work'.¹⁷

The assumption that heteronomous work is unskilled work is thus unfounded. Richard Hyman is right that 'The dynamics of capitalist production relations... have always involved elaborate trajectories of skill, de-skilling, and at times re-skilling'.¹⁸ But Boris Frankel is mistaken when he argues that Gorz 'exaggerates the degree of deskilling which has taken place', 'gives the strong impression that all struggles by workers to control their workplaces... are futile', and 'dismisses even the limited struggles of the working class today'.¹⁹ For Gorz, the technical division of labour is based on functional *specialization*, something which is typically the consequence of *increasing* individual competence. 'A building labourer, for example, has a far greater range of abilities than an engineer specialising in pre-stressed concrete, or a microsurgeon'.²⁰ Gorz does not dismiss the struggles of the working class, he merely insists on a recognition of their limitations. In *Farewell to the Working Class*, he

¹³ Gorz, *Paths*, pp. 50–51.

¹⁴ André Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, trans. Gillian Handyside and Chris Turner, Verso, London 1989, p. 102.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78, his italics.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79, his italics.

¹⁸ Richard Hyman, 'André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat', *The Socialist Register*, London 1983, p. 286.

¹⁹ Boris Frankel, *The Post-Industrial Utopians*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 212–13.

²⁰ Gorz, *Paths*, p. 52.

recognized workers' power 'to control and veto: the power to refuse certain conditions and types of work, to define acceptable norms and enforce respect for these norms upon the managerial hierarchy'.²¹ A few years later, he stressed the importance of self-determined working conditions exempt from oppressive hierarchies and monotonous tasks, but warned that 'such a liberation of work relations is not the same as autonomy of work itself or workers' self-determination (or self-management) of its overall purpose and content'.²²

Moreover, as already noted by Gorz when he cited Simone Weil's statement that 'no one would accept being a slave for two hours a day',²³ reducing socially necessary labour time and enhancing people's genuine autonomy may be a more potent catalyst for working-class struggles for control over the workplace than an affirmation of the bare vestiges of autonomy present in many occupations:

Individuals will, then, be much more exacting about the nature, content, goals and organization of their work. They will no longer accept stupefying work or subjection to oppressive surveillance and hierarchical structures. Liberation *from* work will have produced liberation *within* work, without as much as transforming work (as Marx predicted) into free self-activity with goals of its own.²⁴

What is really at stake in this discussion of a 'dual society'? Two essential themes are apparent. The first is that the Marxist ambition to reconcile the personal motives and desires of every individual with the collective labour of production can have totalitarian implications. Unless society reverts to primitive, small-scale, self-sufficient communities—and renounces the enormous productive capacity and the spaces for autonomy that complex, structurally differentiated industrial societies have created—the reunification of self and society, individual and history, subjective intentions and collective result, is impossible. If this impossibility is not universally recognized, if the material exigencies of the social system are not formally codified and demarcated as a sphere of heteronomy, there may be no effective obstacle preventing a dominant group monopolizing the definition of history and repressing or expelling those who direct doubt or criticism towards the organization of the material system.

When life and work, self and society, moral autonomy and professional responsibility, are declared objectively unified, individuals who claim to experience the rules they have to observe and the work they have to perform as an external imposition, and who criticize the organization of this system and its domination over other social and private activities, may be labelled as human aberrations and become vulnerable to persecution. Failure to identify with the collective, to renounce those feelings, practices and relations—such as sexual love—which resist mediation by society, thus leads to physical or psychological ostracism. Denied the right to experience themselves as separated from their social roles, the victims

²¹ Gorz, *Ferment*, p. 49.

²² Gorz, *Paths*, p. 52, *his italics*.

²³ Gorz, *Ferment*, p. 87.

²⁴ Gorz, *Critique*, p. 93, *his italics*.

may be censored or excluded, branded by the community as moral delinquents corrupted by an insanity that really describes their failure to coincide with their socially defined essence.

Socialist Morality and Emancipation

Frankel notably fails to grasp this argument when he objects to Gorz's belief that a functional organization cannot be 'good' in itself, 'but only by virtue of the space for self-organization, autonomy, co-operation and voluntary exchange which that organization offers'.²⁵ 'This means', Frankel claims, 'that social forces have nothing to fight for, as the denial of good state institutions, or a good society, disarms the Left and relativizes all states—whether fascist or democratic—as not better than one another'. 'In actual fact', he continues, 'Gorz advocates a socialist morality as the basis for a good society, even though he denies any connection between morality and politics'.²⁶

One thing Gorz certainly doesn't advocate is a 'socialist morality'. For Gorz, socialist morality refers to the demand made of workers that they experience the organizational prerequisites of administrative and economic apparatuses as a moral imperative corresponding to their personal will and desire. To say that an organization such as the state cannot be regarded as essentially good, merely restates Gorz's argument that functional power and the systemic requirements that constitute the sphere of heteronomy cannot be evaluated except by reference to people's need for self-determination, for full control over the modes and outcomes of their social co-operation, which can be fulfilled outside that heteronomous sphere.

In reality, emancipatory movements *fight for emancipation*, for the opportunity to produce themselves individually and collectively, assuming responsibility for the content and consequences of their projects. They do not fight for a *state*—in both its literal and political sense—nor a *system* whose functioning is, because of its internal complexity, beyond its members' lived understanding and intentions. A society which defines a system or institution as intrinsically good by virtue of its own internal functioning loses the capacity to resist the extension of its parameters to aspects of private and social experience to which it is existentially inapplicable. In Gorz's view, this is exactly what is taking place, as technical, administrative and commercial apparatuses expand in order to recolonize the growing swathes of time that the economic sphere has left vacant, for want of being able to make it produce surplus-value. Our inability to resist this process of colonization by gauging the value of activities and relationships which have neither economic worth nor societal utility is itself symptomatic of 'the production of a world without sensory values and a hardened sensibility, which hardens thought in its turn'.²⁷

The second major implication of the heteronomy—autonomy distinction

²⁵ Gorz, *Farwell*, p. 118.

²⁶ Frankel, *The Post-Industrial Utopians*, p. 206.

²⁷ Gorz, *Critique*, p. 87.

is that if it is impossible to unify the content, motive and understanding of a job with its final objectives, then it is fruitless to expect workers to challenge the ultimate goals and consequences of their work at the workplace. Or, to put it another way, because of the separation of functional tasks and societal goals, it is a mistake to assume that humanizing the experience of work will humanize its objectives and its results. On the contrary: 'The possibilities for achieving excellent work relations and a congenial atmosphere are just the same whether one is producing chemical weapons or medicines, "Action Man" or "educational" games, pornography or art books'.²⁸

The intrinsic interest of a job does not guarantee its being meaningful, just as its humanization does not guarantee the humanization of the ultimate objectives it serves. Humanizing a job can make even the most barbaric of enterprises attractive for the people who work in them. Work can develop individual abilities, including the capacity for autonomous action, but the individuals' professional autonomy does not necessarily lead to their moral autonomy, that is, their insistence that they will not work towards goals that have not been publicly debated and that they have not been able to examine and assume personally.²⁹

A New Revolutionary Subject?

While Gorz's critics reproach him for asserting 'a creative autonomy for the abstraction capital',³⁰ Gorz's putative materialism is found to coexist with an idealist, anarchist, or existentialist belief in the autonomy of the individual, an idealism that allegedly leads Gorz to replace Marx's revolutionary proletariat with a new historical subject, the 'neo-proletariat'. Thus Hyman argues that 'Gorz oscillates between a highly determinist model of the "juggernaut of capital", and (no doubt reflecting his existentialist background) a tendency to voluntarism and idealism'.³¹ Dick Howard agrees: 'His diagnosis of the end of capitalism's liberating potential leaves only existential ontological freedom as the foundation of a future politics'. He continues: 'Although Gorz rejected the Hegelian-Marxist proletariat as the agent and subject of history, his "non-class" "non-proletariat" is nonetheless its functional replacement'.³² Adrian Atkinson also attests that Gorz's dual society is an incarnation of his philosophical heritage, 'a restatement of liberal individualism rather than any development of Marxism'. 'Gorz's concept of an irreducible dualism... is not Marxist at all but is a very clear reinterpretation of the French philosophical tradition from Descartes to Sartre: that life involves a struggle between an irreducible human essence and the dead machinery of the world around us'.³³ Making the ludicrous claim that in the 1950s Gorz was a supporter of the French Communist Party, which maintained that the apparatus and machinery of the Party hierarchy functioned in the interests of the people, Hodgson claims that Gorz has merely inverted his earlier views, now regarding the machine as

²⁸ Gorz, *Paths*, p. 52.

²⁹ Gorz, *Critique*, p. 83, his italics.

³⁰ Byrne, 'A Rejection of André Gorz's *Farewell*', p. 78.

³¹ Hyman, 'André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat', p. 292.

³² Dick Howard, *The Marxist Legacy*, second edition, London 1988, pp. 389, 390.

³³ Adrian Atkinson, *Principles of Political Ecology*, London 1991, p. 33.

not in the interests of the people: 'There is thus a link between Gorz's quasi-Stalinist position of the 1950s and his quasi-anarchist position today. In both cases the conflicts, contradictions, and necessary elements of autonomy within capitalist industry are belittled. The system is a monolith'.³⁴

While I have already demonstrated that the monolithic character of heteronomy is a misrepresentation of Gorz, these arguments have more searching implications. If Arthur Hirsh is correct that 'in "returning to his subjectivity" Gorz has returned to the "vintage" existentialism of the early Sartre and his own youth',³⁵ does this warrant the claim that Gorz has found a new 'revolutionary subject' to replace the Marxist-Hegelian subject? It is true that the chapter in *Farewell to the Working Class*, 'The Non-Class of Post-Industrial Proletarians', was written in a rather cavalier style that invited criticism. Thus Gorz's claim that the non-class 'is free subjectivity' leads Hyman to condemn as 'sheer mysticism' the insinuation 'that socialism will be established through spiritual conversion alone',³⁶ while Birchall ridicules Gorz's failure to consider 'the determination of the existing ruling class to preserve their privileges'.³⁷

There may be a case for the argument that Gorz misrepresents Marx in order to construct a straw man he can easily demolish,³⁸ but the Marxist retort is weakened by its tendency to engage in intemperate criticisms of Gorz's irreverence for academic convention and of his willingness to take policies, ideas and observations from politically diverse commentators. It is also overshadowed by the tendency to reduce his thesis to one of 'deindustrialization', in which 'the proletariat is in the process of being abolished by technological change'.³⁹ This is refuted with empirical evidence indicating the growth of the industrial proletariat in global terms. From this perspective, Gorz is depicted as an enemy of the working class who believes that workers have neither the strategic power, nor the political sensibility, nor perhaps even the material need, to triumph over capitalism.⁴⁰

Workers' Resentment

In this context, Gorz's position can be clarified as an objective and a subjective thesis. The objective thesis acknowledges that the working class harbours a *negative* capacity to disrupt capitalist growth—what Gorz terms, following Sartre's use of it in the first volume of his work on Flaubert, '*ressentiment*'. This involves pre-empting one's objectification by self-objectification, which for workers means strategically withdrawing the initiative, intelligence and goodwill which capitalism degrades

³⁴ Hodgson, *The Democratic Economy*, pp. 190–1.

³⁵ Arthur Hirsh, *The French New Left*, Montreal 1982, p. 242.

³⁶ Hyman, 'André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat', p. 292.

³⁷ Ian Birchall, 'Review of *Farewell to the Working Class*', *Socialist Review*, no. 50, January 1983, pp. 24–5.

³⁸ Hyman, 'André Gorz and his Disappearing Proletariat'; Birchall, 'Review of *Farewell*'; Alex Callinicos, *Making History*, Cambridge 1987, p. 185.

³⁹ Callinicos, *Making History*, p. 187.

⁴⁰ Paul Kellogg, 'Goodbye to the Working Class?', *International Socialism*, no. 36, Autumn 1987.

but cannot dispense with. 'This behaviour of resentment', says Gorz, 'which, by overacting the role the worker is expected to play, robs the oppressors of the desired results of their orders, is the last refuge of "working-class dignity".' It is in this sense that 'The power of the proletariat is the symmetrical inverse of the power of capital.'⁴¹ But this thesis denies that the working class has the *positive* capacity to eliminate the heteronomy of the functional system and render direct and transparent each individual's relation to the totality of social production.

The subjective thesis refers to the effect of functionally complex, differentiated societies on the perceptions and expectations of the individual. While macro-social work offers scarce opportunity for people to experience their labour as free self-activity, by which they create their world and recognize themselves in it, the differentiation of separate dimensions of existence, by expanding people's repertoire of social roles and identities, introduces a fissure between the self and its social being, thereby releasing a degree of existential autonomy peculiar to modernity.

In the preface to *Farewell to the Working Class*, Gorz observes that a real or potential majority of those in formal employment no longer identify themselves with their work, define themselves by their careers, nor seek and find in their jobs the centre of their lives and their primary source of fulfilment. In its general sense work, for them, has become an external duty or imposition. In its specific sense, work is a 'job' which one 'has'—or is 'looking for'—rather than something one does. The stable linear life pattern oriented around a career vocation has been dislocated by a variety of changes, including the fact that productivity growth in Western Europe has enabled lifetime working hours to be halved in the space of a century. Gorz focuses primarily on the impact of new technologies on work and the consequences for employees in terms of increasing insecurity of tenure, depersonalization of work, and under-employment of skills—for those in or out of work. The increasingly discontinuous and secondary character of the wage relation means that fewer and fewer people can define themselves by reference to their position in an economically determined productive community. Gorz also observes parallel cultural changes which are making the dissociation of people from their work roles more socially acceptable.

The Non-Class of Non-Workers

Gorz uses the term 'a non-class of non-workers' to designate a 'stratum' of people who experience work in this way. This 'wasn't an identifiable and organizable stratum', he later recalls, 'but the emergence of a thoroughgoing cultural change, which has continued to gain ground ever since'.⁴² Insofar as they constitute a 'movement' pressing for the abolition of work-based society, they are not, as Frankel assumes, a 'new revolutionary agent of change',⁴³ an equally idealist replacement for Marx's working class. Gorz emphatically states that the non-class 'is not a "social subject"'. It has no transcendent mission, no unity beyond the

⁴¹ Gorz, *Farewell*, pp. 39, 37.

⁴² Gorz, *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, trans. Chris Turner, Verso, London, 1994, p. 88.

⁴³ Frankel, *The Post-Industrial Unemployed*, p. 212.

experiences of those who compose it, no prophetic aura, no promise or capacity to reconcile the individual with the social, self and society. It is 'the *possible* social subject of the struggle for work-sharing, generalized reduction of work time, gradual abolition of waged work'.⁴⁴ It corresponds to a 'cultural mutation' implying a radical subversion of capitalist ideology and values which 'will only eliminate capitalism if its latent content is revealed in the form of an alternative to capitalism that is able to capture the developing cultural mutation and give it political extension'.⁴⁵

The movement claims a right of autonomy that can only be affirmed by demonstrations of that autonomy itself. It must prefigure the institutional changes which it demands, otherwise its freedom will be negated by its structural articulation. 'No new liberties can be granted from above, by institutionalized power, unless they have already been taken and put into practice by people themselves'. This fact, however, 'does not make it possible to dispense with the problem of defining the workings, juridical bases and institutional balance of power'. It simply means that socialist society 'cannot be produced without, or in opposition to, this non-class, but only by it or with its support'.⁴⁶

It is true, then, that in *Farewell to the Working Class* the 'problem of political vectors'⁴⁷ is poorly addressed, that Gorz 'makes no clear provision for political mediation',⁴⁸ and that 'there is no getting around organizational and institutional links'.⁴⁹ Gorz acknowledges the necessity of a political force but writes that he has 'deliberately left this question open and unresolved'.⁵⁰ This omission does not warrant the allegation that Gorz has a 'dismissive attitude towards economic and political democracy'.⁵¹ Nor is it true that Gorz rejects collective action and fulfilment, returning to a classical liberalism in which 'it is in the sphere of individual autonomy that human beings will find themselves'.⁵² Gorz insists that a political force is necessary to transform the nascent individual autonomy of the non-class into a collective movement and to safeguard that autonomy with compatible institutions and technologies: 'The process of transforming society in accordance with the aims of the movement will certainly never be an automatic effect of the expansion of the movement itself. It requires a degree of consciousness, action and will. In other words, it requires politics.'⁵³

As repeatedly pointed out in later writings, the 'non-class of non-workers' could never be a social 'force' or a 'new revolutionary agent'. It is a loose collection of free-floating individuals who have no social identity, are unable to

⁴⁴ Gorz, *Paths*, p. 35, *his italics*.

⁴⁵ Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 81.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 12, 7.

⁴⁷ Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, Verso, London 1983, p. 105.

⁴⁸ Frankel, *The Post-Industrial Utopians*, p. 232.

⁴⁹ Berger and Kortebe, 'Review of *Farewell*', p. 233.

⁵⁰ Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 13.

⁵¹ Anthony Giddens, 'The Perils of Punditry: Gorz and the End of the Working Class', in Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, Cambridge 1987, p. 295.

⁵² Byrne, 'A Rejection of André Gorz's *Farewell*', p. 79.

⁵³ Gorz, *Farewell*, p. 12.

acquire one, are socially 'doomed' to self-determination and self-production of their 'selves', a condition of *potential* existential autonomy from which, obviously, they may also be tempted to escape regressively into fascist, racist, totalitarian, 'identitarian' fanaticism *if* no cultural means to cope with and achieve their autonomy are available to them.⁵⁴

Contrary to the view that Gorz believed the neo-proletariat to 'constitute the only agent of revolutionary change',⁵⁵ he insists that the striving for emancipation 'cannot assert itself without trade-union struggles for a reshaping of work'. 'Society won't be changed without a trade-union movement worthy of the name "movement"', he continues, 'but the creative impulses most often come from elsewhere'.⁵⁶

The Need to Work

In the first of three papers that criticize Gorz's work, Sean Sayers attacks the utilitarian hedonism that underlies classical economics, which depicts work as a painful disutility tolerated as a means to satisfy deferred needs. As a dialectical materialist Sayers wants to demonstrate the contrary: that the need for work is a historically shaped, distinctly modern phenomenon that has potentially emancipatory implications. Specifically engendered by the capitalist mode of production, the *subjective* need to engage in sociable, active and productive labour is not yet matched, Sayers argues, by 'the *objective* framework of economic and social relations, and the objective organization of work, which would allow this need to be satisfied'.⁵⁷

Although Sayers concedes that Gorz's proposal for the liberation of time does not recommend a life of idle consumption, he makes the now familiar criticism that Gorz believes that 'fulfilment is possible only outside the sphere of employment, which is unavoidably alienating'. On the contrary, Sayers argues, 'it is a mistake to regard all forms of employment in a purely negative light', for not only is work 'a more complex and ambivalent experience' offering 'genuine and important satisfactions' for the majority, but life without work is 'a profoundly demoralizing and unfulfilling one'.⁵⁸

Gorz does not disagree with this, and it is quite wrong to portray Gorz as proposing that work be an optional activity, and that those who elect not to work should be granted the financial means to live on the margins of the macro-social sphere. Sayers mistakenly asserts that in *Paths to Paradise* Gorz toyed with the idea of a 'guaranteed minimum income',⁵⁹ an error that is shared by Frankel, Schecter, Keane and Owens, and Roche.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ *Private letter*, August 1993.

⁵⁵ Frankel, *The Post-Industrial Utopians*, p. 211. The view that Gorz rejects any modern role for the labour movement is shared by Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, New York 1992, p. 124.

⁵⁶ Gorz, *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, pp. 69, 87.

⁵⁷ Sean Sayers, 'The Need to Work', in R.B. Pahl, ed., *On Work*, Oxford 1988, p. 741, his italics.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 730, 731.

⁵⁹ Sayers, 'Gorz on Work and Liberation', p. 16.

⁶⁰ Frankel, *The Post-Industrial Utopians*, p. 84; Darroch Schecter, *Radical Theories: Paths Beyond Marxism and Social Democracy*, Manchester 1994, p. 161; John Keane and John Owens, *After Full Employment*, London 1986, pp. 175–7; Maurice Roche, *Rethinking Citizenship*, Cambridge 1992, p. 177.

This is a mistake because Gorz has always been a critic of the guaranteed minimum income, if we take this to mean a basic universal income primarily designed to support people who are temporarily out of work, or who choose not to work at all. Gorz has always argued that the right to a guaranteed income must entail 'the right of each citizen to receive—distributed throughout their life—the product of the minimum amount of socially necessary labour which s/he has to *provide* in a lifetime'.⁶¹ Unless this right (and obligation) is extended to every active citizen, the alternative—a basic allowance granted to non-workers—will serve only to sanitize the dualization of society by making unemployment, disadvantage and marginalization socially acceptable. For non-workers, such an allowance is allocated as compensation for social and economic exclusion. Because it is given without asking anything of its recipients, it confers on them no rights over the society that maintains them. This is, Gorz acknowledges, the unenviable condition of the unemployed.

Sayers is therefore wrong to state, in a second paper, that, 'By Gorz's standards, unemployment, as a total "liberation from work", should constitute the complete realization of leisure, autonomy and freedom'.⁶² Nor does Gorz, as Sayers alleges, 'celebrate the "demise of the Protestant work ethic" as proof that people are at last coming to appreciate that the need for work is a false and unnatural compulsion produced by modern society'.⁶³ Gorz believes, in fact, that 'the demand for abstract work will grow apace with the reduction of obligatory work time', as socially determined work becomes attractive for the same reasons that captive housewives, the unemployed and retired people desire it:

It provides an escape from the narrowness and stifling conformity of the domestic unit or village community, a way of meeting other people from other places with whom relationships can be freer, less familiar, than with those who see you first and foremost as daughter or daughter-in-law, sister or cousin, and tie you to a carefully regulated world where everyone must keep to their allotted place. It allows you to feel useful to society in a general sense, rather than in a particular way subject to particular relationships, and thus to exist as a fully social individual protected from the pressures of particular groups by anonymous membership of society at large.⁶⁴

It is also untrue that Gorz 'argues that the need to work is a false and artificial creation of modern industrial society'.⁶⁵ On the contrary, Gorz believes that it is 'indisputable that "work" in the sense of *poiesis* is a historical-fundamental need: the need the individual feels to appropriate the surrounding world, to impress his or her stamp upon it and, by the objective transformations he or she effects upon it, to acquire a sense of him- or herself as an autonomous subject possessing practical freedom'.⁶⁶ Gorz's point is that this ideal of work is less and less applicable to the increasingly dematerialized, functionally specialized tasks performed in today's macro-social space. Where individuals are still capable of such

⁶¹ Gorz, *Paths*, p. 41, my italics.

⁶² Sean Sayers, 'Work, Leisure and Human Needs', in Tom Winnifirth and Cyril Barrett, eds, *The Philosophy of Leisure*, London 1989, p. 49.

⁶³ Sayers, 'The Need to Work', p. 738.

⁶⁴ Gorz, *Paths*, p. 54.

⁶⁵ Sayers, 'The Need to Work', p. 736.

⁶⁶ Gorz, *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 55.

sensuous-practical activity by which they impress themselves on the material world and recognize the mark they have made, Gorz argues that they have acquired and exercise this capacity largely outside the sphere of gainful employment.

It is at this point that Sayers and Gorz really differ. Sayers is committed to the Marxist project of reconciling the productive system with the lived meanings and intentions of creative workers. In his view this would be possible in 'a rationally and humanely organized society' which has transcended 'the stultifying confines of the capitalist system' and brought about 'not the liberation of people from work...but rather the liberation of work'.⁶⁷ As Gorz has repeatedly argued, socialism cannot hope to eliminate the inertia and rigidities of the system and its apparatuses—what Sartre called the 'practico-inert'—no more than a 'socialist army' can dispense with hierarchies and a division of labour. The separation of the fruits of human labour from the intuitive understanding and personal intentions of workers could only be reversed by a return to the kind of pre-modern, self-sufficient communities that both Gorz and Sayers regard as regressive. This is why Gorz believes genuinely autonomous activity requires freedom from work, together with the humanization of the labour process to the greatest possible extent.

Misreading Critique

A third paper by Sayers is a critical response to Gorz's *Critique of Economic Reason*. Again Sayers insists on introducing Gorz as a critic of the idea that 'work is a basic human need and right'. He also claims that Gorz has undergone a 'dramatic change' since his earlier books, noting three areas of change, each of them inaccurate. First, he attests that while in Gorz's earlier work 'employment was portrayed as an entirely negative phenomena' and that people should welcome unemployment as a liberation from work, in *Critique of Economic Reason* Gorz recognizes that people do not welcome unemployment. Second, as already noted, Sayers claims that in *Paths to Paradise*, Gorz courted the idea of a 'guaranteed basic income' (Sayers himself puts these words in inverted commas, despite the fact that Gorz has never used them to describe his own proposal), while in *Critique of Economic Reason* Gorz comes out in favour of the right to work and in opposition to the provision of income as compensation for unemployment. Third, Sayers claims that Gorz previously believed that the non-class of non-workers 'were to be the new revolutionary subjects of the "post-industrial" age'. But now 'Gorz has given up his hope that these groups will accomplish the revolution he wants to see'. 'His appeal is now directed mainly to the goodwill of the labour movement'.⁶⁸ I have already demonstrated that all three depictions of Gorz's earlier position are misreadings. For the sake of clarity, Sayers's critique of Gorz will now be considered in terms of the three topics he introduces: *domestic labour*, *the caring professions*, and *economically rational work*.

On the subject of domestic labour, Sayers finds Gorz's desire to limit the rationalization of housework 'surely untenable'. Sayers makes three

⁶⁷ Sayers, *The Need to Work*, p. 740.

⁶⁸ Sayers, 'Gorz on Work and Liberation', pp. 16–17

points. First, he argues that Gorz's view that 'work-for-oneseif'—work which 'serves exclusively the maintenance of my own self and those with whom I form a life-community'⁶⁹—is fundamental to people's existential well-being, does not match up with the majority of housewives who find housework a burdensome chore. Second, he argues that Gorz offers 'no criteria for deciding where—if anywhere, the economic rationalization of housework is appropriate, and where it is not', and he 'ignores the possibilities for further socializing and mechanizing domestic labour'.⁷⁰ Third, since for most people a great deal of housework is inescapable, Sayers argues, opposing any reduction of its burdensome aspects 'on the basis that housework is, or ought to be, a "labour of love", is reactionary and misguided'.⁷¹

The Servant Class

While Gorz has never proposed that housework be a 'labour of love', it is true that Gorz regards domestic labour—which is virtually all that is left of 'work-for-oneseif' since industrial capitalism transferred production for oneself to the public sphere—as both exacting and fulfilling. Reducing it entirely to one aspect or the other is impossible, he believes, but minimizing the oppressive aspect of housework is possible if the time available to do it is increased, and if responsibility for domestic chores is equitably shared between the inhabitants of the household:

[Work-for-oneseif] is ambivalent, being at once burdensome and gratifying, or each of these in turn, depending on the circumstances. Not doing such work means entrusting it to servants. It is mainly made of all the various activities of self-maintenance. Such work will be less burdensome and more gratifying as free time is more abundant.⁷²

Sayers' argument that Gorz fails to provide a criterion to show where the economic rationalization of housework is inapplicable is disingenuous, not least because Sayers acknowledges in a footnote that Gorz does offer a criterion, but one that he summarily dismisses as 'seriously flawed'. Gorz opposes the so-called 'rationalization' of domestic labour because he regards it as intimately connected with the 'dualization' or 'South-Africanization' of society. This is the process by which a division is emerging between well-paid, full-time workers in stable conditions of employment in the highly capital-intensive sector which produces the greatest part of the economic surplus, and low-paid, part-time, precariously employed workers in the labour-intensive service sector, who are increasingly employed by the former to save them time and relieve them of burdensome chores.

The economic precondition for the growth of this servant class, Gorz points out, is the falling relative price of commodities due to automation. This has increased the disposable income of the wealthy at the same time as it has increased the number of those expelled from the automated production process, many of whom can only find replacement work by

⁶⁹ Gorz, *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 61.

⁷⁰ Sayers, 'Gorz on Work and Liberation', pp. 18, 19.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷² Gorz, *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 97.

serving the personal needs of those who have benefited from their redundancy. This divided society has also been promoted by income-tax cuts in favour of the rich, which has taken purchasing power away from those poorest sections of society who are likely to spend it on the products of automated industries, and increased the income of the wealthy minority who are more likely to spend their wealth on luxuries and personal services that are labour-intensive and so 'create jobs'.

Gorz defines the 'new servants' as those who provide socialized services with no more efficiency or quality than consumers could perform or provide them for themselves. This is not 'productive substitution', as in the heroic age of industrialism when household production was replaced by socialized production, but 'equivalent substitution' whose chief purpose is to redistribute wealth without calling into question the work ethic, the wage relation and competition for jobs. The employment of these service workers:

take[s] no less time (if we take into account the working hours accumulated in the installations and equipment involved) than we ourselves would if we were to do the things they do for us. The time they gain for us is not productive time, but time for consumption and comfort. They are not working to serve collective interests, but to serve us as individuals, and to give us private pleasure. Their work is our pleasure. Our pleasure 'gives them work' which we consume directly.⁷³

Gorz accepts that there may be an indirect economic rationality for such work—what economists call 'comparative advantage'—if the time saved by these servants is used by the purchaser to perform labour that is more socially useful or economically productive than the activities the servants would be capable of doing. But this is never entirely the case, because workers who are obliged to spend their time doing other people's chores on top of their own are already prevented from acquiring the skills necessary to contribute to society in a socially recognized, productive way. Their subordinate position serves as a pretext for attributing their poor status to inherent inferiority, while the legal contract or public identity conferred on workers who are fortunate to be employed by service enterprises serves to conceal, Gorz argues, a relationship of servility whose essential characteristic is the *giving of oneself*.

The first precondition for the true economic rationalization of work-for-oneself is, therefore, that 'the quantity of paid labour provided is much lower than the quantity of domestic labour saved'.⁷⁴ The alternative is that the members of the professional elite:

will purchase services and appliances which will allow them to save time *even when producing these services and appliances takes more time than the average person will save by using them*. They will thus foster the development, across the whole of society, of activities which have no economic rationality—since the people performing them have to spend more time in doing them than the people benefiting from them actually save—and which only serve the private interests of the members of this professional elite, who are able to purchase time more cheaply than they can sell it personally.⁷⁵

⁷³ Gorz, *Critique*, p. 155.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 5, *his italics*.

Here then is one criterion for deciding whether the economic 'rationalization' of domestic labour is appropriate or not: the rationalization of housework is inapplicable *when it is not economically rational at all*.

The Threat to Personal Life

Having established the distinction between heteronomous and autonomous spheres, in *Critique of Economic Reason* Gorz defined the autonomous sphere as the realm of non-commodity activities. This was further refined and broken down into autonomous activities—'activities which are neither necessary nor useful and which constitute an end in themselves'—and work-for-oneself—'the production of that use-value of which we are ourselves both the originators and the sole beneficiaries'.⁷⁶ Gorz pointed out that because much heteronomous labour is *not necessary* insofar as it produces destructive, obsolescent or anti-economic goods and services, and because much necessary labour (work-for-oneself) is *not heteronomous* insofar as it corresponds to felt needs and experiences, then 'it is no longer so much the freedom/necessity distinction which is decisive, but the autonomy/heteronomy opposition'.⁷⁷

In contrast to activity which is autonomous or immediately useful to the person performing it, heteronomous work is experienced as something quite distinct from the intentional, sensuous-practical activity envisaged by Marxist humanism. Gorz cites a definition by Claus Offe and Rolf Heinze, which states that the concept 'work' cannot be applied to activities which have greater utility for the person performing them than for society at large. Instead, work 'presupposes the "social" ... nature of the goals of an activity... and the possibility of its critical evaluation from the point of view of efficiency and productivity'.⁷⁸

The threat posed by the encroachment of heteronomy into activities which are not guided by this criterion of social utility is, therefore, the threat of destroying the lived meaning of a private and micro-social space 'in which individuals exist for one another as unique persons who do not have to subordinate their lives and their aims to the goals of society, though they may certainly, of their own free will, choose to co-operate on a personal basis in the achievement of social goals'.⁷⁹ Further rationalisation of the lifeworld begs the question:

By dint of monetizing, professionalizing and transforming into jobs the few remaining production and service activities we still perform for ourselves, might we not reduce our capacity to look after ourselves almost to the point where it disappears, thus undermining the foundations of existential autonomy, not to mention the foundations of lived sociality and the fabric of human relationships?⁸⁰

Gorz's point is that if the attempt to include in the definition of 'work' the labour of self-maintenance and reproduction is not resisted, if we fail, in other words, to appreciate the lived meaning that household activities

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 153.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 166. Frankel fails to grasp this distinction and, assuming that all burdensome work is heteronomous, wonders why domestic tasks should not be paid for like other forms of heteronomous labour. *The Post-Industrial Utopians*, p. 91.

⁷⁸ Cited by Gorz, *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 61.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 51–2.

have for the people who perform them, then there is no reason why the right to parenthood, to take care of one's body and one's living environment, to look after oneself, one's relations and neighbours, cannot and should not be given over to the sanction and control of external authorities. Responding to this threat, Gorz is most compelling in his opposition to the socialization of the 'maternal function'.

In this formulation, the intensely affective and relational bodily activity by which the mother gives a life and cherishes it—a life which takes the incomparably unique form of *her* child—is reduced to women's participation in the social process of production of *life* in general, life as a socially useful product ... This conception plays right into the hands of the technocratic-authoritarian spirit of domination, since if the production of life and of subjects capable of taking their place in the system of social labour is the truly productive form of *work* from a social point of view, there will be no valid reason not to socialize that work: that is to say, no reason not to remove it from the personal control of each mother and transfer it to socially dependable, functional and efficient apparatuses. This is precisely what is recommended by advocates of ectogenesis (i.e. growing the foetus outside the mother's body right up to total maturation), on the pretext of 'releasing women from the servitude of motherhood'.⁸¹

On the second subject, that of the caring professions, Sayers repeats his view that 'it is simply not possible to draw a sharp line between activities which can and cannot be economically rationalized'.⁸² This is his response to Gorz's view that a reduction in working hours would allow the repatriation to voluntary communities of many social services currently administered by professionals.

Public and Private Welfare Systems

Gorz's attempt to sketch a grassroots alternative to care that is either commercialized by the market or standardized by the codifying logic of a dependency-promoting state, is unfavourably received by Sayers who interprets it as a 'positively dangerous' ally to the Right's critique of the welfare state. Sayers makes two mistakes here. First, he wrongly interprets Gorz's proposals for services organized on a voluntary basis as merely an extension of what he rightly notes is the 'haphazard and variable' standard of informal care by the family. The professionalization of such services, Sayers argues, would ensure that care was guaranteed on a universal basis and minimum standards specified and enforced. Here Sayers appears to assume that voluntary organizations are incapable of guaranteeing reliable service provision based on collectively-defined standards and user-defined needs, of enforcing members' adherence to democratically determined rules and regulations, and of assessing the needs of users without recourse to external consultants and professionals.

Sayers' second mistake is to assume that Gorz proposes that the state and market be rolled back and people be left to fend for themselves. Not only does Gorz emphasize that, 'It is not a question of dismantling the welfare state but of relieving it',⁸³ but he even goes as far as to propose a '*synergy*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 62–3, *his italics*.

⁸² Sayers, 'Gorz on Work and Liberation', p. 18.

⁸³ Gorz, *Critique*, p. 237

within a two-tiered system supported on the one hand by centralized services provided by institutions, and on the other by self-organized, co-operative services staffed by volunteers'.⁸⁴

Each tenant may choose either to use the self-organized services or the more anonymous ones provided by the local authority. The former are not designed to compensate for the shortcomings of the latter, but to shape them and orient them in a decentralized manner, towards needs defined by residents themselves.⁸⁵

Sayers' final subject is Gorz's category of economically rational work. This he inaccurately defines as 'the absolute, polar opposite of caring work—it excludes any element of personal concern or involvement; it is *merely* a means to the end of earning a livelihood'. Reminding us that 'people *need* satisfaction and involvement from work', and can usually find it in the most unfavourable of jobs, Sayers repeats his caricature of heteronomy and objects that 'It is simply wrong to believe that work for wages must necessarily be nothing but an alien and purely instrumental activity'.⁸⁶ Sayers concludes that Gorz's 'gross romanticization of personal and community relations' and his attempt to defend the sovereignty of the domestic sphere is a version of 'liberal individualism' which is 'conservative and even backward looking, for its aim is to limit or reverse economic development'. Gorz's position, he continues, is a 'despairing philosophy', for 'if we give up hope of a satisfactory social sphere, we cut ourselves off from an essential and vitally necessary sphere of activity and potential fulfilment'.⁸⁷

We have already noted Gorz's opinion that heteronomy 'does not mean that the workplace has to be hell or purgatory', and also his belief that the heteronomous, macro-social sphere 'will raise individuals above the narrow space of the local community', offer 'constantly renewed possibilities for discovery, insight, experiment and communication [which] can prevent communal life becoming impoverished and eventually suffocating', and thus provide 'the space for circulation on which communal life can feed'.⁸⁸ Despite these explicit words from *Farewell to the Working Class*, Sayers insists on reading Gorz as a traditionalist, contrasting his idea of socialism with that of his own 'progressive philosophy, which criticizes the backward-looking romanticism of writers like Gorz'.⁸⁹ This view is shared by David Byrne, who believes Gorz 'has no admiration for industrial capitalism', that he advocates a 'not a progressive' but a 'conservative utopia', implying 'a reversion to artisan and petty commodity production'.⁹⁰

Capitalism Tamed by the Lifeworld

To put the record straight, Gorz is a theorist of *modernity*.⁹¹ More than

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146, *his italics*.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁸⁶ Sayers, 'Gorz on Work and Liberation', p. 19, *his italics*.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Gorz, *Farewell*, pp. 102–3.

⁸⁹ Sayers, 'Gorz on Work and Liberation', p. 19.

⁹⁰ Byrne, 'A Rejection of André Gorz's *Farewell*', pp. 87, 89.

⁹¹ See Gorz's critique of Illich's traditionalism in *Critique*, pp. 162–4.

any proponent of dialectical materialism, Gorz wishes to safeguard the *dynamism* of a society which has, by virtue of its internal differentiation, evolved into relatively autonomous spheres of action and validity. It is precisely the clear and demarcated separation of heteronomous and autonomous spheres which preserves society's *reflexivity*, its capacity to act upon itself, its potential for 'progress'. Gorz is not a utopian traditionalist: 'I consider utopian, in the bad sense of the term, ideal objectives that don't indicate new possibilities for emancipatory action'.⁹² In other words, re-establishing the unity of differentiated spheres by subordinating them to the rationality of one of them 'will have an inevitably totalitarian character: it will block the society's capacity to evolve'.⁹³

Gorz's definition of socialism, therefore, 'does not aim to abolish the economic and administrative systems, but only to limit and bind them into the lifeworld'.⁹⁴ This requires, in other words, that economic rationality is preserved along with the relative autonomy of the economic sphere. Socialism does not mean the development of a 'socialist economy'. 'There is no other science of management—no other micro-economic rationality—than the capitalist one'.⁹⁵ In Gorz's eyes, the logic of *capital* must be retained; what is transcended is *capitalism* as a social totality in which 'relations conducive to the valorization of capital predominate in the hierarchy of values, in everyday life and in politics'.⁹⁶ The socialist project must be to lock the maximization of productivity and profit into a democratically defined 'framework plan' so as to subordinate capitalist rationality, as Karl Polanyi argued, to society's non-quantifiable values and goals. Whilst capitalism is defined by Gorz as the domination of society by economic rationality, the process by which the apparatuses of production have acquired autonomy from felt needs is also, he believes, a precondition for society to exercise democratic control over the economy's social and ecological orientation.

Conclusion

If Gorz has been gravely misinterpreted, the widespread neglect of his contribution to popular debates in the social sciences is equally serious. Arguments for 'economic democracy', for example, typically refuse to distinguish between professional and moral autonomy. Industrial democracy is instead portrayed as a 'morally desirable' 'economic system' constitutive of socialism.⁹⁷ As we have seen, socialism conceived of as an alternative social and economic system tends to censor a more radical concept of autonomy based on our ability to bear moral responsibility for our acts and their consequences. Even if the putative growth of regional economies permits a reduction in the spatial division of labour entailed in the production of certain goods, when production and consumption are separated—as they must be in any complex modern society where local self-sufficiency is rejected—we cannot describe the functional autonomy of workers empowered to determine the best means of

⁹² Gorz, *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*, p. 95.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁹⁷ See Robin Archer, *Economic Democracy: The Politics of Feasible Socialism*, Oxford 1995.

satisfying abstract market demand as moral autonomy. In a market economy, workers are no more able to pass moral judgement on consumers' sovereign choices than consumers are able to choose their commodities knowing the concrete conditions under which they are produced. Ultimately, as we have seen, by failing to distinguish social labour from the autonomous activity by which we transform and appropriate our sensory world, we abandon all grounds for not giving over the most intimate of personal activities to the rational functioning of the democratic economy.

Popular ideas about 'market socialism' and proposals to delimit the sphere of the market have regularly omitted Gorz's valuable contribution to this debate.⁹⁸ Fashionable discussion about 'post-Fordist' forms of work organization and technology has also failed to answer Gorz's criticisms.⁹⁹ Interrogating the utopia of work depicted by the likes of Kern, Schumann, Piore and Sabel, Gorz has explored the experience of modern labour from a phenomenological perspective, refuting the claim that 'flexible specialization' augurs the reunification of occupational culture and the culture of everyday life. Technical autonomy, intellectual stimulation, variety and challenge is not enough to bridge the divorce between work and life.¹⁰⁰ The question is whether work enriches or sacrifices our physical sensibilities, whether it extends the ground of our lived certainties—the three-dimensional 'lifeworld' that we know through our bodies as unmistakably as our bodies ourselves—or whether, by its materials and techniques, it does violence to our corporeal existence. In Gorz's account, the increasingly dematerialized nature of work, the displacement by computers and automated machinery of workers' sensuous-practical relation to their personal tools, the materials they handle and the products they create, means that work can no longer be credibly equated with 'the free development of individuality'.

The danger Gorz observes in the glorification of work and the ideal of the sovereign, multi-skilled 'craftician' is that, when the total volume of economically necessary work is steadily diminishing,¹⁰¹ the utopia of work can only be maintained at the cost of denying the privileges of the working elite to a growing mass of unemployed and marginalized workers, thereby destroying the bonds of solidarity that are a prerequisite for workers' emancipation. At the very least, a reduction in working time would have the ideological impact of weakening the work ethic. More effectively, by redistributing working time it would abolish the competition for scarce jobs on which capitalist domination is based. It is precisely for this reason that employers are much more acquiescent to skilled workers' demand for 'autonomy within heteronomy', as Gorz puts it, and the rehabilitation of the utopia of work.

What is most striking is the reluctance of British commentators to consider Gorz's proposals for reducing working time and guaranteeing

⁹⁸ See Gorz, *Critique*, pp. 135–71.

⁹⁹ See Ash Amin, ed., *Post-Fordism: A Reader*, Oxford 1994.

¹⁰⁰ Gorz, *Critique*, pp. 73–89.

¹⁰¹ See Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work*, New York 1995.

an income independent of the number of hours worked. In a recent collection of essays on the need for time,¹⁰² there was not a single reference to Gorz. Mulgan and Wilkinson, for example, favour micro solutions against macro policies which encroach on people's freedom of choice. Instead of Gorz's proposal for *ex ante* decisions on the allocation of disposable time based on predicted productivity growth—a decision to which the economy must adapt—*ex post* reasoning leaves many contributors worried that reduced working hours can only be financed by a reduction in income which will always be unattractive. Unwilling to advocate what Gorz calls a 'politics of time'—the task of civilizing the time coming our way—Robert Lane's worthy demonstrations that money does not buy happiness lead him to conclude that, because research indicates that increased free time is only spent in passive consumption, greater wealth should be translated into humanized working conditions rather than greater consumption or free time.

The importance of Gorz's ideas stretch wider than this, including an existential critique of the sociologistic conception of the lifeworld,¹⁰³ a phenomenological interpretation of the political ecology movement,¹⁰⁴ and a persuasive argument against wages for housework.¹⁰⁵ It is frustrating to be misunderstood, but an insult to be ignored. A more faithful reading of Gorz will prove the relevance of his work to the problems of today.

¹⁰² *The Time Squeeze*, *Demos Quarterly*, no. 5, 1995.

¹⁰³ See Gorz, *Critique*, pp. 173–180. This can be traced back to the neo-Sartrean text Gorz wrote in the 1950s, *Fondements pour une morale*, Paris 1977, especially the chapter on 'Natural Life', pp. 141–97.

¹⁰⁴ Gorz, 'Political Ecology: Expertocracy versus Self-Limitation', *NLR* 202, November–December 1993, pp. 55–67.

¹⁰⁵ See Gorz, *Critique*, pp. 140, 150–2, 161–4. Michael Young and A. H. Halsey for the Institute for Policy Research recently proposed a 'parent wage' to discourage full-time mothers from choosing single parenthood for financial reasons *Family and Community Socialism*, London 1995.

The Left's Advance in Italy

The Left's victory in the Italian general election on the 21 April is likely to have a large impact on popular consciousness. It has revived a sense of collective hope and once more made concrete that fading but never totally obliterated belief that change is possible. This is the Italian Left's first electoral victory this century, and in this sense marks a watershed. It is quite possible, as was the case with the victory of Mitterand and the French Socialists in 1981, that the momentum of the Left's advance will not be long maintained, that disillusion will follow, that the reforms achieved under the Prodi government may be fewer, less important, less effective or less lasting than its supporters imagine in the aftermath of Berlusconi's defeat. But it would be quite wrong to write it off in advance as a mere alternation of office-holders. At the very least, the 1992-94 assault on the Mafia can be resumed and the utter degradation of civil society in southern Italy brought under some control. With the Right in disarray, the Left has won time and space to develop its own solutions to the Italian crisis.

Italy's new electoral system somewhat exaggerated the Left's achievement, since the Ulivo (the Olive Tree or centre-left alliance) plus Rifondazione Comunista (which had an electoral agreement with Ulivo) received only 43.3 per cent of the total vote, ahead of the right-wing alliance by a whisker—the Polo (or Pole of Liberty, the Berlusconi-Fini axis) received 42.1 per cent of the vote. If the results of the first-past-the-post elections are taken into account then the Left's lead was a little larger, and so the overall results give the Ulivo 284 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, Rifondazione 35 seats, the Lega Nord 59 seats and the Polo 246 seats.¹ Since Berlusconi was enthusiastic about the non-proportional aspects of the new electoral system, he is in no position to complain. The Left has been given a chance because Berlusconi's project came apart. It was scuppered, first by the defection of the Lega Nord, and then, in these elections, by the Lega's strong performance with 10.1 per cent of the vote—nearly 2 per cent ahead of its performance in 1994, and without the benefit of electoral allies. Following the March 1994 elections, Berlusconi refused to meet the federalist demands of the Lega, partly

¹ The voting figures for the Westminster-style constituency section of the Camera dei Deputati are worth noting: Ulivo 15,729,124, Polo 15,028,275. The Progressists—Rifondazione candidates unchallenged by Ulivo as a result of the electoral pact—got a further 1,000,244 votes. *Il Manifesto*, 24 April 1996, p. 9.

because of his Faustian pact with the ultra-centralist Alleanza Nazionale; this led to the downfall of his government after only eight months. The decision of Umberto Bossi, the leader of the Lega, to break with Berlusconi showed a political courage and attachment to principle that partially atone for his earlier deal with the Right. It seems that many supporters of the Lega were alarmed by the sinister and corrupt features of a government in which the neo-fascist Gianfranco Fini gained respectability and Berlusconi could protect his media interests. The Berlusconi government bungled attempts to reform the pensions system and became the target of popular demonstrations, thus further fraying the allegiance of his allies.

The Right's erratic record cost it business support. It is clear that the openly anti-Maastricht stance of the Alleanza Nazionale (AN) frightened the markets. Even at the start of the election campaign, Berlusconi's record of proven financial irresponsibility in government, as well as in his own business dealings, were hardly reassuring to the majority of European capitalists. (Murdoch, with his stake in Berlusconi's Mediaset, is a case apart). The decision of Mediobanca veteran Maccanico to throw in his lot with Prodi and the Popolari, and of the outgoing Prime Minister, Lamberto Dini, to mount his own independent appeal to the moderate Europhile bourgeoisie, increased Berlusconi's isolation. The latter's intemperate attacks on FIAT, Pirelli, Mediobanca and the *poteri forti* ('strong powers') as a whole—not just his personal enemies at Olivetti—left big business with the impression that, for all its vaunted neo-liberalism, Forza Italia was becoming a mere adjunct of Fini, who, on appropriate occasions, will indulge in crowd-pleasing attacks on the financial establishment. Similarly, sections of the Lombard and Venetian industrial petty bourgeoisie, who in 1994 had backed Berlusconi as a more respectable neo-liberal alternative to the plebeian Bossi, now felt that Bossi was their best defence against Fini's anti-European and southern-orientated project. Whilst the prosperous, northern petty bourgeoisie which believed it had a future in the European Union looked one way, the more archaic, crisis-ridden sectors of the same class looked the other. Fini's gains in the north doubtless came in large part from the small shopkeepers, now for the first time in post-war Italian history faced with the kind of competition from out-of-town supermarkets and discount warehouses that their British equivalents had experienced years before. Such petty-bourgeois desperation fuelled the most notorious episode in the whole campaign, the barracking of Prodi by Torinese shopkeepers in March, even if hard-core AN veterans instigated it.

Degrees of Moderation

The PDS skilfully exploited the divisions which opened up amongst the victors of the 1994 election and managed to remain on reasonable terms with the social movements resisting austerity. Many who voted for the PDS have been waiting for this triumph all their lives; for some of the older generation, it may even be seen as the victory over the fascists and the bosses of which they were cheated in 1945.² Yet the government is

² The Right did better amongst the young as the differential between the Camera and the Senate demonstrated; the Ulivo had no difficulty in obtaining a majority in the Senate, elected by those over twenty five

led by a former Christian Democrat and the leaders of the PDS have long been signalling the modesty of their objectives. The Prodi government will respect the advice of the IMF and the Bundesbank, but it will also have to answer to its own electorate, to Parliamentary allies and to social and labour movements which have played an important part in the defeat of the Right. The new government's moderate instincts were advertised in a post-election interview given by Prodi to the *International Herald Tribune*, entitled 'Italian Leader Pledges Eighteen Months of Fiscal Rigour'. Prodi's approach was apparent in his blunt statement that 'I made a point during my election campaign of not promising the moon and of not hiding anything. Now we will need a tough medium-term programme of deficit reduction if Italy is to get back on the road to Europe under the Maastricht Treaty.'³

The Ulivo received the support of the PDS, the Christian Democrat Popolari, the Greens and the list of Lamberto Dini. The PDS will, of course, be the leading force in the government. Walter Veltroni, deputy leader of both the PDS and Ulivo, is wedded to the narrow and uninspiring minimalism of that dreary duo, Clinton and Blair, as he explained in a recent interview. Veltroni seems to reject every positive aspect of the PCI/PDS tradition and subscribes to a cult of the Kennedys that would have distressed an austere moralist like Berlinguer. One sentence sums up his repudiation of the Italian labour movement's heritage—'However, I do have a dream in my life: that in Italy, we can succeed in creating something like the Democratic Party in the US.' Veltroni's antipathy to Rifondazione is as strong as Blair's aversion to Old Labour, as is evident from his affirmative answer to the question, 'Don't you think that, whatever the niceties of electoral strategy, the hard Left—despite its romanticism—should be wiped out?'⁴

Massimo D'Alema, the party leader, sees things somewhat differently, as he explained after the election: 'I have nothing against a Democratic Party... perhaps tomorrow it will be born but today the European Left is made up of great socialist, social-democratic and labour forces. And it is to Europe that we must look, to the forces with which we collaborate in the European Parliament, to those social democrats that have been so close to us in these elections as well.'⁵ In early May, D'Alema was moot-ing the possibility of a reunification of the PDS and Rifondazione, citing alleged European parallels, contrasting the division between socialists and communists in Spain and France with the incorporation of radical elements in mainstream parties in Britain and Germany. Bertinotti, of course, objected: 'Tony Blair has reduced his internal left to mere witness bearers.'⁶ As an independent force the Rifondazione will naturally have greater influence in the new Parliament, and in Italian society, than it would if it entered the PDS. D'Alema himself is a ruthless, and sometimes short-sighted, political operator. Earlier this year he displayed a fatal desire to compromise with his political opponents, seeking a deal

³ *International Herald Tribune*, 29 April 1996

⁴ 'Italy's Baby Blair: Interview with Walter Veltroni', *Prospect*, April 1996, pp. 64–7. Furthermore, in an interview with *La Repubblica* on 23 April, he explicitly stated that his reference points were Clinton and Blair

⁵ *La Repubblica*, 23 April 1996

⁶ *La Repubblica*, 3 May 1996

with Berlusconi and Fini according to which, instead of elections, there would have been a coalition government of the PDS, Forza Italia and the AN. This was aptly dubbed 'The Three-Headed Monster', by *Il Manifesto*. To give credit where credit is due, Veltroni and Prodi both opposed this sordid manoeuvre—had it succeeded, it would have sunk the Ulivo without trace.

But D'Alema retains more rapport with the social roots of the PDS than does Veltroni. Many of those who voted for the Ulivo still see it as the bearer of a tradition of social reforms; the PDS remains, at least in the Red Regions, a mass party rooted in the localities and firmly linked to the trade unionists of the CGIL, which, whatever its deficiencies (and they are manifold), has not yet been transmuted into a predominantly middle-class fan club for its leaders. Moreover, where the PDS is too accommodating, as in Turin, it is vulnerable to a strong challenge from Rifondazione.⁷ Not only do Veltroni and D'Alema still have to reckon with a mass base, but Prodi is no Americanizer. Whilst in no sense an ideological leftist, Prodi is not far removed from the older generation of moderate social democrats elsewhere in Europe, and has a public commitment to 'social partnership' and a vision of the world closer to that of a John Smith than either Blair or Clinton.⁸ Prodi observes: 'Even Helmut Kohl has had to compromise on spending cuts. That is the way it is in Germany and in Italy, where we need to build consensus. In Britain it may have been different but look at what happened in France recently. The French government tried and failed to impose its measures. Like it or not, this is continental Europe where we need a dialogue among all social partners.' The new government will certainly ask the trade unions to accept sacrifices. Michele Salvati, the Ulivo economist, who entered Parliament on the PDS proportional list, told *Il Manifesto* on 13 April: 'The trade unions gave us a hand in reducing the cost of labour. They will have to give us another hand over labour market flexibility. They will give it because otherwise flexibility will be imposed regardless and against the trade unions' wishes.' The significance of Salvati's warning lay in its timing, on the eve of the PDS's 'Labour Day'—a Saturday of rallies against unemployment with a primarily southern focus. In fact, Prodi's political approach would induce apoplexy in Peter Mandelson's coterie, despite the letter of endorsement Prodi received from Blair on the eve of the election. Prodi's lack of enthusiasm for the excessive simplifications of television has become notorious but his distrust of opinion polls is also worth underlining. Prodi was overheard, at the Ulivo's 150,000-strong final rally in the Piazza del Popolo on 18 April, pointing out that if Moses had believed in opinion polls he would never have crossed the Red Sea. This having been said, the sorry condition of Italian state finances and Prodi's belief in the virtues of negotiated austerity do not allow us to be very optimistic.

⁷ The PDS's rejection of the popular Communist veteran Novelli at the Turin mayoral elections of 1993 will not be rapidly forgotten and the agreement this year to support the candidacy of Franco De Benedetti, the brother of Olivetti's boss, for the Senate poured salt into the wound, particularly as he was about to transfer jobs from Turin to Vietnam. Paolo Griseni, 'Alle urne senza scarpe', *Il Manifesto*, 13 April 1996, gives a full account of the impending redundancies at the senator's Superga gym-shoe factory and explains how Vietnamese workers are prepared to put in a 72-hour week for 160 dollars a month.

⁸ This is evident even in the *International Herald Tribune* interview, which though it recommends financial rigour does not do so in neo-liberal terms.

The Defeat of Video Bonapartism

It seems likely that the April general election, the third in four years, will provide some resolution, however partial and temporary, to the continuous crisis in Italian politics. This crisis opened with the end of the Cold War and the drawn out dissolution of the old PCI in 1989–91, and gathered pace with great rapidity after the Mani Pulite judicial investigations into corruption from February 1992. For a time in 1994–95 it looked as if the downfall of Craxi, Andreotti and Forlani had brought no gains for the Left. Indeed it seemed probable that the revelation of the extraordinary degree of corruption that had riddled Italy's First Republic would unleash a swing against parliamentary democracy itself as disorientated centrist and right-wing voters sought a 'Man of Providence' to restore something like order and normality. In the event the rise of the Italian Right has, as Lucio Magri hoped, proved to be 'resistible'.⁹ The danger of a plebiscitary regime overwhelmingly reliant on television to get the appropriate results in referenda, which might be best characterized as Video Bonapartism, has received a major setback. Despite his very public grief at the results, Fini has still gained support. The heartening collapse of the political career of Bernard Tapie, Berlusconi's nearest French equivalent, through judicial action over his fraudulent business dealings, still leaves equivalents to both Fini and Berlusconi elsewhere in Western Europe. The strength of Haider's neo-Nazis in Austria and the recent increase in support for the policies of Le Pen in France demonstrate the enduring menace of the far Right. The incipient Murdoch-Goldsmith axis in Britain, with the *Sun* boosting the Referendum Party, accompanied by the ever more virulent nationalism on the Portillista wing of the Conservative Party, indicates that Italy only offered an instance of general European—and some would say, citing Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan—world-wide trends. Therefore, as leading French Socialist Henri Weber has recognized, it is of European, and not just Italian, significance that the danger of a rapid descent into authoritarianism, all too evident during the eight months of the Berlusconi government in 1994, has been averted.¹⁰ Berlusconi's spell has clearly been broken, even if his party's share of the poll remained almost unchanged—20.6 per cent as against 21 per cent in 1994. The anti-Communist rhetoric that was effective against Occhetto seemed rather ridiculous when directed against Prodi, and the Berlusconi of 1996 sounded angrier and less optimistic than the man who had promised one million new jobs two years earlier. Fini's calculated decision to distance AN from Berlusconi's increasingly paranoid attacks on the judiciary further damaged the Cavaliere, although Fini's tactics also had the unintended effect of damaging the Polo as a whole rather than giving a sorpasso to AN. Even Berlusconi's intermittent attempts to push Reaganomics as a painless miracle cure for Italy lost credibility in the face of Italian reports of the *Guardian* interview in which he said: 'An austerity policy is an absolute

⁹ Lucio Magri, 'The Resistible Rise of the Italian Right', *NLR* 214, pp. 125–33.

¹⁰ 'Belle notizie per l'Europa!' (interview with Henri Weber), *Il Manifesto*, 24 April 1996. For a lively discussion about the seriousness or otherwise of these dangers, see Rosanna Rossanda, 'Penombra', *Il Manifesto*, 27 October 1995; Perry Anderson, 'Fantasmi', *Il Manifesto*, 1 November 1995; Rosanna Rossanda, 'Caro Perry', *Il Manifesto*, 10 November 1995; and Perry Anderson, 'Il fantasma della destra eversiva', *Il Manifesto*, 30 November 1995.

necessity for our country'.¹¹ Forza Italia, his 'virtual party', is tied hand and foot to the company structures of Mediaset, Fininvest and Publitalia and devoid of any capacity for independent political initiative. The purge of Dotti and other moderates from the electoral list of Forza Italia served as the final indication that it could never autonomously evolve into a neo-liberal party of the mainstream Right, as commentators such as Patrick McCarthy have maintained.¹² Fini, although remaining a much more dangerous figure because of his relative youth and considerable political skills, has for the time being been marginalized, because of northern hostility to his southern clientele, and because of a decline in relative, though generally not absolute, strength in relation to Forza Italia on the southern mainland.¹³ AN's spectacular Roman performance—31.4 per cent from the already impressive 27 per cent of 1994—reveals its core constituency in the swollen bureaucracy of the capital. AN does not need Bossi to demonize it; it is the purest incarnation of Roman Ladrone that the Lega could ever wish for.

Prospects for Presidentialism

The PDS's own suicidal hankering after presidentialism—we have mentioned its attempt to create a coalition with Forza Italia and AN—will be curbed by the increased strength of Rifondazione and the Lega Nord. These external constraints will be absolutely indispensable given D'Alema's statement after the Left's victory: 'And I repeat that I do not consider the direct election of the President to be a danger for democracy; with the right counterweights and the necessary guarantees, it could be an innovation that will be useful for the country.'¹⁴ It is worth emphasizing that neither Prodi personally nor the Popolari as a party have any enthusiasm for presidentialism and that another, albeit much weaker, component of the Ulivo, the Greens, are also opposed to it. The PDS will have to ally with Forza Italia and AN if they are to get the presidential project through parliament, and such an alliance, although by no means impossible, would not be well received by many Ulivo voters.

The hypothesis that dominance over a nation's television system was a foolproof route to political power in an atomized, consumerist, post-industrial society with a large proportion of functional illiterates, a hypothesis that brought joy to the hearts of Rupert Murdoch and his minions in News International and BSkyB, and fear to so many on the Left,

¹¹ The *Guardian*, 18 April 1996.

¹² Patrick McCarthy, *The Crisis of the Italian State. From the Origins of the Cold War to the Fall of Berlusconi*, London 1995, pp. 181–283. For a more robust assessment of Berlusconi and Forza Italia, see Matt Frei, *Italy: The Unfinished Revolution*, London 1996, pp. 214–45. Joseph Farrell, 'Berlusconi and Forza Italia: New Force for Old?', *Modern Italy*, Autumn 1995, pp. 40–52, also argues that Forza Italia 'has an in-built democratic deficit'.

¹³ AN only got 11 per cent in the north, as against 22.3 per cent in the centre, 19.2 per cent in the south and 13.5 per cent in the islands. Forza Italia got 22.3 per cent to AN's 19.2 per cent in the south; obviously there were regional variations in the parties' positions.

¹⁴ Massimo D'Alema, interview in *La Repubblica*, 23 April 1996. This elliptical formulation confirmed his earlier, more explicit, statement in an interview with *L'Unità*, 13 April 1996. 'And the reforms will be made together. We have found a good agreement, the direct election of the Head of State that they wanted and the two-round voting system that we wanted. Unlike Berlusconi, I stick to my word.'

has proved erroneous; Murdoch's ire is evident from recent *Times* editorials on the Italian elections.¹⁵ The two parties virtually excluded from the nation's screens, as much because of the inevitably simplifying logic of television presentation as from deliberate political bias, the Lega Nord and Rifondazione Comunista, have gained their highest ever share of the vote in a national election—10.1 per cent for the Lega and 8.6 per cent for Rifondazione—by the most traditional of electioneering methods. Neither Bossi nor Bertinotti can be dismissed as dinosaurs for relying so heavily on an endless series of public meetings in all the places where they might conceivably have gained supporters; Bossi spoke in as many Lombard or Venetian villages and small industrial towns as he could visit in a day, whilst Bertinotti embarked on an equally heroic nation-wide speaking tour heavily weighted towards the major factories and the more substantial working-class communities. Nor was Bertinotti altogether wrong in placing some trust in the force of the printed word, embodied in the cut-price Communist daily, to overcome the miasma spread by the television set in the worker's home; the hammer blows of *Liberazione* against the repressive practices of FIAT's management paid handsome dividends in the Torinese vote, Rifondazione's highest in a major city.¹⁶ On 11 April, Bertinotti had addressed a public meeting at the gates of FIAT Mirafiori in Turin; some days earlier, the FIAT management had prohibited Bertinotti from addressing a similar rally at the FIAT plant at Melfi in Basilicata whose Social Darwinist hiring practices have been made notorious by *Liberazione*. Whilst Prodi's performance on television exceeded the meagre expectations of both his opponents and his supporters,¹⁷ it cannot be claimed that he succeeded in projecting, or even wanted to project, the image of a charismatic leader, in sharp contrast to his political opponents, Berlusconi and Fini. Although Fini's media persona may be natural—whilst Berlusconi's is essentially a studio concoction, heavily reliant on make-up, lighting, speeches learnt by rote and his perpetual Hollywood smile—one of the major criticisms made of Fini by disappointed AN members was of his excessively televisual campaign. Such criticism may be misplaced; Fini's cool and controlled television performances are more likely to sway the uncommitted than Fini unleashed, for his dominance in the final rally in Piazza Navona on 19 April may have frightened many outside the capital, even if he inspired his Roman fans, particularly the shaven-headed thugs in bomber jackets, to frenzies of exaltation.

¹⁵ 'Italian Radicals', *The Times*, 18 April 1996, 'Left Over Italy', *The Times*, 23 April 1996. The editorials' slant differed markedly from that apparent in the informative articles written by both John Phillips and Richard Owen, the two successive Rome correspondents over the last few months, suggesting the involvement of Murdoch in Citizen Kane mode. As for Fini, he was fondly described as 'the talented young leader' and 'the coming man of Italian politics' in *The Times* for 18 April 1996. 'Neo, post, crypto, quasi... the fact is that the party that was founded in 1948 to carry the torch of fascism into the future still clings to the man who inspired it.' Matt Frei, *Italy*, p. 202, is the crispest expression of the neo-Murdochian consensus.

¹⁶ It was 13.7 per cent as against 6.2 per cent in 1994. Rifondazione's highest vote in an industrial city was the 14.7 per cent it achieved in Livorno whilst its highest votes in small towns were achieved in the Venulia-Viareggio, 17.1 per cent, Carrara, 17 per cent, Massa, 16.3 per cent. For the Communist campaign against FIAT's use of spies amongst the workforce of its Torinese factories, see *Liberazione*, 16, 17 and 19 April 1996, especially the 17 April issue.

¹⁷ Prodi was generally believed to be the winner in the 12 April television debate with Berlusconi, even *La Stampa* called it a draw, whilst the 19 April debate was universally regarded as a draw.

The Prodi government has emerged as a result of a successful, defensive Popular Front strategy, rather than any consistent, publicly propagated plan to transform Italy's society, economy or political system.¹⁸ Yet it cannot be assessed purely negatively as no more than a bulwark against authoritarian reaction. As Bertinotti has recognized, it does have a more positive significance. For the first time since 1947 the Italian Left will be in office, and for the very first time it will be the dominant partner in a coalition—in the post-war coalition of 1945–47 the Christian Democrats could treat the Socialists and Communists as junior partners. Despite Prodi's premiership and the presence of the Popolari—with rather more seats in parliament than their share of the vote really justifies—the balance of forces is such that the coalition cannot be dismissed as merely the realization, after a twenty-year delay, of the 1976–79 PCI dream of turning its external support for a National Solidarity government into a genuinely governmental historic compromise with Christian Democracy. This time the ex-Christian Democrat Popolari are the junior partners, despite De Mita's pompous pronouncements on who he thinks fit to hold the Interior Ministry. Paradoxically, given his lifelong moderation, Napolitano's elevation to one of the greatest offices of state will represent a symbolic triumph for the older generation who backed the PCI long before it became the PDS.

¹⁸ For an implicit agenda, see Michele Salvati's modernization programme outlined in 'The Crisis of Government in Italy', *NLR* 213, pp. 76–95

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Myths and Realities: A Reply to Cecile Jackson

The myths that Cecile Jackson identifies in her article in NLR 210 are that self-determination and freedom are better achieved through identification with 'nature' rather than separation from it; the utopian assertion of the superiority of subsistence economies and communal life; the rejection of scientific knowledge in favour of local, indigenous and women's knowledges, with the latter based on an essentialized view of women.¹ The core of her concern is that these myths are leading to rationality becoming a 'dirty word' which, in turn, undermines the potential for historical and materialist analysis: 'We need to reassert the value of a historical and materialist analysis, informed by a deconstruction of some unexamined key terms in ecofeminist positions such as love, nature, indigenous knowledge, Third World women.'² While I have sympathy with many of Jackson's concerns about both radical environmentalism and ecofeminism, and have expressed similar reservations elsewhere,³ I think that her arguments ignore the radical potential of both movements for a historical, materialist analysis. Further, I would argue that such an analysis that is not green and feminist is incomplete.

Part of Jackson's difficulty is that she focuses mainly on Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva's *Ecofeminism*.⁴ This book, which I find both insightful and inspiring, is a collection of essays that, as Jackson herself points out, combines materialist and radical-cultural feminist analyses. Like many ecofeminist texts, it is part thesis and part treatise, and is therefore easily criticized for hyperbole and unwarranted generalizations. The same might be said of the *Communist Manifesto*, but movements and ideas have to start somewhere and both radical environmentalism and ecofeminism are still fairly young. They are, however, maturing into sophisticated analyses of our current social and ecological ills. Mies and Shiva's *Ecofeminism* builds on Mies's earlier materialist-feminist analysis of

¹ Cecile Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths: A Gender Perspective', NLR 210, pp. 124-40.

² *Ibid.*, p. 140.

³ M. Mellor, *Breaking the Boundaries*, London 1992; 'Green Politics: Ecofeminist, Eco-feminine or Ecomasculine?', *Environmental Politics*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1992).

globalization and Shiva's influential critique of the 'green revolution' and its impact on women in subsistence communities.⁵

A problem for ecofeminism and green politics generally, is that radical environmentalism is a very diverse movement, encompassing positions that have been criticized as ecofascist to ecoanarchism and ecosocialism. Ecofeminism embraces feminist spiritualists, radical cultural feminists, social ecofeminists—influenced by the work of ecoanarchist Murray Bookchin—socialist ecofeminists and postmodern ecofeminists.⁶ Within this spectrum, there is much to justify Jackson's criticisms, but also much to be built upon. As I have argued elsewhere, socialist-materialist ecofeminism, together with a South perspective, can provide a much firmer foundation for historical materialism than white, male, productivist-workerist versions of Marxism.⁷ Jackson's critique is also somewhat unfair in that it runs together animal rights, elements of deep ecology (ecocentrism) and ecofeminism. There are divisions within and between all these movements. Ecofeminism, for instance, has been criticized for ignoring animal-rights issues⁸ and for being humanist rather than eco-centric.⁹

Essentialism and Universalism

Jackson argues that ecofeminism makes unwarranted assumptions about women's natures and the potential for women's solidarity while ignoring inter- and intra- gender relations. She also takes issue with ecofeminism's rejection of modernity which, in this context, embraces individual autonomy, scientism and rationalism. I would certainly agree with Jackson that a lot of ecofeminist literature, particularly that influenced by West Coast spiritual-cultural feminism, falls into the 1970s radical feminist trap of biological essentialism and false universalism. A great deal of the difficulty here lies in the style of writing which is often poetic and declamatory rather than academic. Again, the same could be said of socialist pamphleteering which, while politically inspirational, proved to be empirically and theoretically somewhat problematic. Although a great deal of ecofeminist rhetoric implies a universal and essential separation of women–nature and men–culture, in practice it is a critique directed at a specific historical relation, the dualist structures of Western patriarchy.¹⁰ The ecofeminist aim is to reclaim the despised halves of those dualisms: nature, woman, emotion and the vernacular as against society, man, rationality and the scientific.

Jackson is concerned that ecofeminism and ecocentrism will undermine

⁴ M. Mies and V. Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, London 1993.

⁵ M. Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, London 1986, V. Shiva, *Staying Alive*, London 1989.

⁶ I discuss these in detail in my forthcoming book *Feminism and Ecology*.

⁷ M. Mellor, 'Ecofeminism and Ecosocialism: Dilemmas of Essentialism and Materialism', *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, vol 3, no 2 (1992). See also A. Salleh, 'Nature, Woman, Labour, Capital: Living the Deepest Contradiction', in M. O'Connor, ed., *Is Capitalism Sustainable?*, New York 1994.

⁸ D.K. Johnson and K. Johnson, 'The Limits of Partiality: Ecofeminism, Animal Rights and Environmental Concern', in K. Warren, ed., *Ecological Feminism*, London 1994.

⁹ R. Beckerley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, London 1992.

¹⁰ See, for example, Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, London 1993

the women's liberation project of 'recognition of women's full humanity'.¹¹ The point at issue here is what is meant by humanity? There have been many feminist critiques of the Western concept of the 'human' as representing white, bourgeois, male interests, values and experience.¹² The case made by both ecocentrists and ecofeminists is that the Western model of modernity based on this 'human' is ecologically unsustainable. Ecofeminists go on to argue that male 'autonomy' is achieved at the expense of both women and nature.¹³ Western notions of self-determination and autonomy have at their centre the idea of the transcendence of the natural world. Biology (bodies) and ecosystem (nature) are external to the social.

The dynamics of Western society are based on the assumption that the human being is fit and 'free' to labour, mobile, neither too old nor too young, unencumbered by emotional or physical obligations—elderly parents, children who do not want to move schools. It is this that is the myth: real people are not like that. They have bodily and emotional needs, a life cycle and occasional bouts of physical or mental trauma. They have obligations, and get tired. Women have suffered by being associated with human embodiment, both their own and in their responsibility for the needs of others. They are seen as physically weaker, more governed by bodily functions and limited by childbirth, nurturing and domestic obligations. For women en masse to become self-determining, free individuals, would require a revolution in the whole notion of what it means to be human. Some indication of the impact of women's refusal to engage in their traditional roles can be seen in the crisis of reproduction in countries such as Italy where the fertility rate is now 1.26.¹⁴ Equally, the assumption that human activity as represented by Western industrial-capitalist models of growth can continue indefinitely or be generalized to the whole of humanity is also a myth. The West-North, representing about 20 per cent of the global population, consumes 80 per cent of world output. The reality of the human condition is that we are all biologically embodied in a temporally limited life-cycle and embedded in a physically limited ecosystem. 'Equality' feminists as exemplified by Jackson—and quintessentially de Beauvoir—see women's liberation as following the Western patriarchal model of transcendence. Ecofeminists would argue that transcendence is an illusion: when some groups claim transcendence others have to bear the burden of their embodiment and embeddedness. Immanence, not transcendence, is the natural condition of humanity, since we are always embodied and embedded in an interconnected ecosystem.¹⁵ We can buck biological and ecological forces to a certain extent, but only for a time: there is no 'free lunch'.

If Jackson wants to argue for self-determination and autonomy, she needs

¹¹ Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths', p. 125

¹² One of the earliest was G. Lloyd's *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy*, London 1984.

¹³ M. Mellor, 'Women, Nature and the Social Construction of "Economic Man"', *International Journal of Ecological Economics* (forthcoming)

¹⁴ Mariarosa Dalla Costa, 'Capitalism and Reproduction', in Bonefeld et al. *Open Marxism 3: Emancipating Marx*, London 1995

¹⁵ Mellor, *Breaking the Boundaries*, pp. 256ff

to specify what this means if she is not to embrace patriarchal liberal-bourgeois individualism by default. Jackson asks that women should be economically independent of men and implies that this can be achieved within our present economic and ecological framework. It is not an argument for the status quo to ask what kind of 'independence' women could achieve that would be globally sustainable? Will liberation for women in the West-North be yet another burden for women (and men) of the South and on planetary resources? The ecofeminism that I am developing is a materialist analysis that is based on immanence, rather than transcendence. This is not to reject class or gender analysis *within* capitalist patriarchy, but to look at the wider materiality of human society and the relations of exploitation involved. A materialist ecofeminism remains part of the historical materialist project, but closer to the early, rather than the late, Marx.

Different Types of Science and Reason

Immanence was central to Marx's conception of 'man' as part of natural history and nature as part of human history: transcendence and immanence were in a dialectical relation. Unfortunately as Marxism developed, an overemphasis on nature as an aspect of human history eclipsed the fact that humanity remains part of natural history. To assert that humanity is embodied and embedded is not to imply that humans—and particularly women—are determined by *biology* and *ecology*. I agree with Jackson's critique of ecocentrism here. There is no 'natural' way forward that can be 'read off' from 'Nature'. Nor is there any necessary harmony in nature. Nor can we look to a Goddess or any other mystical solution—any moral and political solution rests with humanity. I would also agree with Jackson that we need 'science' in some form to help us understand our condition. However, I am not happy about her uncritical notion of 'rationality'. There are many kinds of rationality and many kinds of 'science'. Humanity is arrogant to think it can understand and control the ultimate conditions of its own existence. In my definition of rationality I would include humility and a sense of the 'beyondness' of the totality of natural processes. I would also argue that this could be grasped inwardly, even spiritually, that we could sense our immanence in the contemplation of our own existence as part of a greater material, not mystical, whole.

Another of the myths that Jackson identifies is the claim that non-industrial, non-market subsistence communities hold the clue to a future sustainable society. She also criticizes Mies and Shiva for implying that environmental struggles in subsistence peasant communities are purely *women's* struggles, thereby misrepresenting their basis as struggles and overstating the feminist awareness of the women involved. Jackson would prefer to see these as basically *peasant* struggles in which women happen to be involved. However as Omvedt has pointed out, women's involvement in environmental struggles has contributed to their increased political involvement and to establishing an ecofeminist agenda in such struggles.¹⁶ Jackson—with Agarwal—also argues that

¹⁶ G. Omvedt, "Green Earth, Women's Power, Human Liberation". Women in Peasant Movements in India', in V. Shiva, ed., *Class to Home: Women Reconnect Ecology, Health and Development Worldwide*, London 1994

Mies and Shiva's work does not adequately address the question of gender relations in non-Western society.¹⁷ There is an implicit assumption of harmony in subsistence communal life that, Jackson argues, is untenable. I would certainly agree with Jackson that radical environmental thought generally does not take account of sex-gender relations in advocating its preferred solution of local self-sufficient communities. I would argue that the emphasis in Mies and Shiva's work is less on the idea of community than that of subsistence. There are two ways of looking at subsistence, as a particular form of production or as a level of consumption. Mies and Shiva's analysis hovers somewhere between the two but their main aim is the withdrawal of communities and groups from the process of economic globalization which they see as the major cause of ecological destruction and women's oppression.

For Mies and Shiva, as for most ecofeminists, the main focus of their attack is 'capitalist patriarchy' in the West-North. Mies and Shiva see Western capitalist patriarchy's myth of 'self-determination and autonomy' as resting on the colonization of women, peoples of the South and the natural world. Claims to scientific rationality that emanate from such structures of exploitation must necessarily be suspect. If we are searching for a model of sustainability, we should look to subsistence economies which already represent a sustainable relationship with the natural world. Subsistence communities in the South, and particularly the women within them, are therefore placed in an epistemologically privileged position.

A Materialist Analysis of Immanence

This is another of the 'myths' that Jackson rejects, pointing out that 'local knowledges' are themselves gendered and do not always represent the interests of women within those communities. Jackson also defends scientific knowledge and its benefits against the claims for the superiority of indigenous knowledges. I partly agree with this. There is a tendency within ecofeminism, certainly as exhibited by Mies and Shiva, to reject the West-North and all its works in a way that puts tremendous political pressure upon non-Western communities to provide global solutions. At the same time, they are right to point to the huge reservoir of accumulated knowledge in subsistence communities, and to argue that subsistence communities should be defended against hostile incursions from the global capitalist economy. Nevertheless, I would agree with Jackson that we cannot make uncritical assumptions about the superiority of social relations in such communities. There is a tendency to polarize modernity against 'tradition' in both Jackson and Mies and Shiva. Jackson is overly optimistic and uncritical about Western ideas of science, autonomy and rationality, while Mies and Shiva are overly uncritical and optimistic about small-scale subsistence communities.

However, Jackson is wrong to see no benefit for historical materialist analysis and women's liberation in ecofeminist solutions:

¹⁷ B. Agarwal, 'The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1992)

Ecofeminist prescriptions are for women to reject transcendence, embrace the body, bond to our mothers, remain embedded in our local ecosystems, abandon the goals of freedom and autonomy, rely on and care for our kin and community and remain in subsistence production. Such conservatism can hardly claim empowerment for women.¹⁸

While Jackson argues against 'radical environmental myths', I have argued from an ecofeminist perspective that Jackson's preferred models of scientific rationality, autonomy, self-determination and transcendence are also myths. Ecofeminism—at least my version of it—is not asking women to 'embrace the body' or cleave to our mothers. What I am concerned with is a materialist analysis of immanence and a critique of the social relations of transcendence. We are embedded in our local ecosystems, and, in the case of the West-North, in the global ecosystem since we consume the bulk of its resources. For the West-North it is not a case of remaining in our local ecosystem but of getting out of everybody else's. It has to reduce its consumption to a level that allows the rest of humanity and other species to survive. Whether we then adopt the solution of locally self-sustaining communalism, as advocated in most eco-centric thinking, or an ecologically sustainable level of international trade and mobility, is another question. A lot of the criticism of 'green' solutions could be avoided if we were to distinguish clearly between subsistence as a mode of production and subsistence as a level of consumption.

Jackson is wrong to see ecofeminism as conservative, at least in the political sense of this term. It is a radical perspective that calls for a revolution in the relationship between humanity, as represented by its present globally dominant structures, and the natural world. It argues that in the relationship between humanity and nature (most) women and (some) men are differently placed. Gender is one of the dimensions along which social space is created by the transcendence of biological and ecological time. To the extent that women bear the burden of human embodiment and embeddedness, they have more awareness of the immanence of human existence. To the extent that human societies are created on a false sense of transcendence, autonomy and self-determination they will be socially and ecologically destructive. I do not think such an analysis is a 'myth' or that it is irrational. It is transcendence that jettisons rationality not immanence.

¹⁸ Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths', p. 129.

An Ecofeminist Bio-Ethic and What Post-Humanism Really Means

A holocaust goes on among us: tomorrow at dawn, another ancient plant or bird will be extinct; nine-hundred million people starve;¹ dammed-up rivers run sour and parched soils crack open; continents swarm with environmental refugees; man-made viruses are unleashed; silently, an ozone hole and electro-magnetic radiation cull new cancer victims; oil spills suffocate sea life and melting seas threaten island communities; body parts and DNA are carved up and traded; city people breathe sulphurous air, their food laced with wartime pesticides; and mothers bear limbless jelly babies from nuclear fallout that rings the globe. Will you too, close your eyes to these crimes, the linear model of 'progress' exported by an enlightened West?

Certainly, our humanist 'social science' has failed to grasp such happenings, numb to the palpable materiality of nature's decimation. And writing as if 'ecology' were merely an irritating new world view, many left intellectuals argue that the 'central issue' in ecopolitical thought should be the status of 'human rights' versus those of non-human species. Cecile Jackson takes this line in her essay, 'Radical Environmental Myths: A Gender Perspective'.² As a feminist, Jackson is rightly concerned about how radical ecology's post-humanist bio-ethic will affect the lot of women and other disadvantaged people. Accordingly, she urges us to engender environmental debate without delay. For, in the ongoing 'struggle for recognition of women's full humanity', Jackson suspects women are now losing political ground to non-human species.

Ecofeminism and Gender Analysis

Gender studies look at how masculine and feminine behaviours are historically shaped and culturally specific. Jackson writes as if no Green theory had yet integrated such analysis, but gender-focused contributions to environmental philosophy have been ongoing for at least two decades, as well as hearty debates between women and the ecopolitical

¹ Press release no. 8330, UN General Assembly, New York 1995

² Cecile Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths: A Gender Perspective', *NLR* 210, pp. 124-140

establishment.³ In contrast to Jackson's opposing movements approach, ecological feminists integrate the two struggles, observing that: 'The marginalization of women and the destruction of biodiversity go hand in hand. Loss of diversity is the price paid in the [Eurocentric] patriarchal model of progress which pushes inexorably toward monocultures, uniformity and homogeneity.'⁴ The international ecofeminist literature is substantial, consisting of newsletters, articles, anthologies, and some two dozen classic texts. Scholarly works include activist D'Eaubonne's *Feminism or Death* (1974), leftist theologian Ruether's *New Woman, New Earth* (1975), historian of science Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1981), sociologist Mies's *Patriarchy and Accumulation* (1986), physicist Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1989), and philosopher Plumwood's *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993).

By sidelining gender analysis in ecofeminist writing, Jackson misrepresents its politics as a form of naturalistic reductionism. Ecofeminist theorists may indeed discuss the significance of biological and sexed activities such as birthing, but not without understanding that feminine and masculine gender identities are historically, culturally and discursively mediated. Jackson's recent self-positioning as an advocate for gender analysis thus seems oddly uninformed. Her demand for a 'historical political economy to make sense of linkages' between culture and nature and, her statement that 'gendered studies of local knowledges are conspicuously absent', ignores Pietila's work on Finnish housewives and GNP; Mies' study of piece workers in Narsapur; or for that matter, my account of women's ecological consciousness-raising in Australia's steel city.⁵

If Jackson's claim about the lack of gender analysis in ecofeminism is inadequately researched, equally her critique mistranslates several basic propositions. To take an example or two: she quotes Mies and Shiva's *Ecofeminism* (1993) as saying: 'In grassroots movements...it is women more than men who understand that a subsistence perspective is the only guarantee of survival for all.'⁶ Reading with essentialist eyes, Jackson finds here a claim that a priori, regardless of gender socialization, women are somehow innately better able to understand daily survival needs. In fact, Mies and Shiva see women's practical ecopolitical sensibility as a learned outcome of gender-ascribed labours and responsibilities. Moreover, as ecofeminists, they want to move beyond the oppressive division of labour that loads so much on women's shoulders with so few

³ Jackson dates the upsurge of public interest in environmentalism from 1994, whereas it goes back at least to Earth Day 1970 in the USA; or the birth of the world's first Green party in Tasmania 1972. A gendered challenge to ecocentrism was delivered in 1983. See Ariel Salleh, 'Deeper than Deep Ecology: The Ecofeminist Connection', *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 6, 1984, pp. 335-41; followed by 'The Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate: A Reply to Patriarchal Reason', *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 14, 1992, pp. 195-216 and 'Class, Race, and Gender Discourse in the Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate', *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 15, 1993, pp. 225-44.

⁴ Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, London 1993, p. 6.

⁵ Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths', p. 136. compare Hilkka Pietila, 'Women as an Alternative Culture: Here and Now', *Development*, vol. 4, 1984; Maria Mies, *The Locomotives of Narsapur*, London 1982; Ariel Salleh, 'Environment: Consciousness and Action', *Journal of Environmental Education*, vol. 20, 1988. See also 'Nature, Woman, Labour, Capital', in M. O'Connor, ed, *Is Capitalism Sustainable?*, New York 1994.

⁶ Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths', p.130, citing Mies and Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, p. 303. Gender statistics on the environmental labour force underscore women's peculiar attraction to a politics of protecting nature.

resources or supports. Their analysis is not only thoroughly gendered, but socialist, calling for grassroots resistance to a transnational economic system based on privatization of commons. Mies and Shiva strive for a socially de-gendered non-division of labour; regional self-reliance; and minimum production designed for satisfaction of vital needs, leaving time over for loving, and creative play.

In parallel vein, when Banuri and Apffel Marglin in *Who Will Save the Forest?* say that 'women's ways of knowing...often have a non-instrumental core', Jackson condemns the observation as pre-gendered and thus essentializing.⁷ Clearly, men can be non-instrumental, but the point is that under 'actually existing' social arrangements they are rewarded for being operators. As Shiva tells us, in the forests of northern India, local men are readily drawn into the cash economy based on logging for export; Mathai has observed the same in Kenya, and Lechte in Papua New Guinea. Ruddick's philosophical thesis too, in *Maternal Thinking*, gets an essentializing read from Jackson.⁸

Yet it is Jackson herself, who expounds Ruddick as if 'mothering' described a sex or gender-specific set of attributes. In fact, Ruddick points out that men too, can do this caring work, and she is at pains to disconnect the skills and knowledges of mothering from either sex or gender. Looking more closely into Jackson's text, it becomes plain that her focus on apparently essentialized attributes is a by-product of her own emphasis on individuality. This stops her from seeing that ecofeminist politics is interested in relational change—the lines that join individual points being more important than the points themselves. Epistemologically speaking, people experienced in mothering know just how delicate the line between self and other identity is, a perceptual maturation that is readily transferred to an ecological context.

Likewise, when Mies talks about 'consumer self-interest', she is not referring to some Hobbesian essential nature; rather, she is noting the typical behaviours of people forced to live under capitalism. Globalized capital pulls us away from a sense of place, community bonds, and sensitivity to preservation of the local ecosystem. But Jackson is wary of mean-minded parochialism in a politics organized bio-regionally. Ecofeminists too, acknowledge that possibility, and continually work to expose sexist behaviours and old-style familialism in all politically transformative work. What Jackson omits to concede is how pettiness turns up in our failing nation-state bureaucracies as well. It is not the human scale of ecocentric politics which is faulty, but something far more fundamental to our social practices.

The Immanent Logic of Capital

The term 'essentialism' is routinely called in as hit man by men and women looking for a quick theoretical put-down of some feminisms. However, as Spivak notes, it is 'used by non-philosophers simply to mean all kinds of things, when they don't know what other word to use...

⁷ Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths', p. 134, on T. Banuri and F. Apffel Marglin, eds, *Who Will Save the Forest?*, London 1993, p. 20.

⁸ Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, Boston 1989.

anti-essentialism is a way of not doing one's theoretical homework.⁹ The reality is, as Fuss's scholarly work on discursive modes reminds us, 'essentialism' is a pre-condition of any political work. So bourgeois liberal rational-choice theorists call on 'a theory of human nature' and essentialize 'interests'.¹⁰ Socialists must essentialize 'class' in order to mobilize their transcendent vision. The proletariat is spoken of as an homogenous group, and for organizational purposes, regional differences and internal class fractions are played down. Feminism too, can only function by treating 'women' as an essential category. However, Jackson, borrowing the post-modern distaste for generalization, attempts to discredit Mies and Shiva's theoretical analysis for essentializing and idealizing women, reducing differences between them. In fact, ecofeminists are very aware of the complementary roles Third World and Western women as producers and consumers respectively, are called upon to play; but they are equally aware of exploited factory workers in the US, say, or of Third World elite women tied to a Western life style of high consumption.

It would be easy to assume that Jackson trivializes ecofeminism so as to clear the centre ground for her own 'gender perspective'. But the source of her distortions appears methodological rather than motivational. 'Radical Environmental Myths' consistently fails to distinguish between immanent and transcendent discourse, so attributing contradictions to ecofeminist writing which are not actually there. Hence, Mies and Shiva are presented as unsympathetic to urban migrants in the Third World, while Jackson condones the movement away from rural subsistence economies as a necessary survival strategy. But the latter focus is palliative and totally framed within the immanent logic of corporate expansion. Mies and Shiva, on the other hand, make their case in transcendent voice, demanding an end to manipulative development regimes that destabilize viable farm communities and their environments. Both standpoints are humanist, but the ecofeminist one is bio-ethical as well, for it is not a case of either humanity or nature.

and other confusions over ecofeminism, result from the synchronic rather than process-based habit of thought which informs Jackson's essay. So, when Mies says things like 'freedom is the freedom of those who possess money', Jackson paints it as tacitly offensive to women struggling for higher wages.¹¹ Mies and Shiva would opt out of the exchange society altogether, and they explore innovative ways to invigorate reciprocity and community in the West. Against this, Jackson urges that 'non-monetized relations can be deeply exploitative' and ecofeminists would accept that. But even if gender equality were to be realized under capitalist or socialist systems of production, that would not necessarily improve the lot of other humans and species.

The fight for equal pay is a survival matter for many of us, and in an immanent sense, a major step forward in realizing an enlightened humanism. But ultimately, these struggles lead down a political cul-de-

⁹ Gayatri Spivak, interview with Ellen Rooney, *differences*, vol. 1, 1989, pp. 132-3; Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, New York 1989.

¹⁰ For a case of the pot calling the kettle black, see Caroline New, 'Man Bad, Woman Good? Essentialisms and Ecofeminisms', *NLR* 216, pp. 79-93.

¹¹ Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths', p. 131, citing Mies and Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, p. 66.

sac. Lenin's phrase, 'the trade union mentality', sums it up—if the pie is poison, a bigger slice will do no good. Ecofeminists do not buy into a socialist or postmodern future built on commodified relationships. They are trying to discover alternative strategies which help people here and now, without playing into the hands of an ultimately inhuman and unsustainable global economy. For there is no doubt about it, when activists wheel and deal with capital, they affirm its legitimacy.

Nature/Culture and Ecocentrism

The first premise of ecofeminism is that patriarchal cultures, most recently the technocratic West, tend to identify women with nature and treat both as resources. Mainstream environmental thought has so far shown little interest in 'the woman question'. Nevertheless, since Jackson assumes that ecofeminism is based on biology, she conflates ecofeminist politics with the ecology movement's ecocentric paradigm.¹² It is true that ecofeminists and ecocentric radicals both affirm the 'internal relatedness of phenomena'—a deep understanding of human embeddedness in ecological relationships. But Jackson's unwittingly sexist subsumption of ecofeminism to an ecocentrist philosophy, led by such eminent figures as Worster, Goldsmith, and Guha, produces a very shaky taxonomy. An ecofeminist would not naturalize the caste system, as she maintains that Guha does. Moreover, there are major differences between ecofeminists and other radical environmentalists over women's reproductive rights versus the latter's 'androcentric' demand for population control as panacea to environmental ills.¹³

Perhaps nothing more vividly illustrates women's human embodiment in ecological relations than the mother-child symbiosis in pregnancy and its vulnerability to environmental disturbances. This is one reason for the strong focus on toxic dumping and factory labour conditions among ecofeminist activists and scholars.¹⁴ The socialist drive to emancipate women 'as subjects' through equal participation on the production line, overlooks the inevitable costs of industrialization. Jackson sees twentieth century 'high' technologies as empowering to the dispossessed. But this is a very superficial and short-term assessment, albeit one shared by many well-intentioned occupational health activists. The problem is that it fails to come to grips with an eco-logic by which everything is connected to everything else.

While Marx himself was profoundly aware of the fallout from industry and the metabolic flow between humanity and nature, Jackson's socialist

¹² Jackson's reliance on Robyn Eckersley's *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, Albany 1992, may have encouraged this subsumption of women's theoretical work.

¹³ In addition to the debate in *Environmental Ethics*, further gendered criticisms of 'actually existing ecocentrism' have come from Janet Biehl, 'It's Deep but is it Broad?', *Kick It Over*, Winter 1987; Ynestra King, 'What is Ecofeminism?', *The Nation*, 12 December 1987, pp. 702, 730–31; Sharon Doubiago, 'Mama Coyote Talks to the Boys', in J. Plant, ed., *Healing the Wounds*, Philadelphia 1989.

¹⁴ For ecofeminist contributions on health: Rosalie Bertell, 'Unholy Secrets. The Impact of the Nuclear Age on Public Health', in L. Caldecott and S. Leland, eds, *Radiation to the Earth*, London 1983; Pat Costner et al., *We All Live Downstream*, Eureka Springs, AR 1986; Patricia Hynes, *The Racing Silent Spring*, Oxford 1989; Lin Nelson, 'The Place of Women in Polluted Places', in I. Diamond and G. Orenstein, eds, *Recovering the World*, San Francisco 1990; Lynette Dumble, 'In the Name of Choice and Freedom: RU486', *21C Magazine*, January 1996.

feminism and humanist ethic descend directly from the classic Cartesian self/other, nature/culture dualism. The polarizing and synchronic mindset which frames her critique of ecofeminism will not cope with 'the biological' and 'the sociological' at the same time.¹⁵ Hence the discomfort with ecofeminist references to bodily activities. Omitting to reframe her politics in a way that can respond to global ecological crisis, Jackson holds up the standard bourgeois liberal terminology by which mainstream feminism has made its disembodied case. Her gender analysis is housed in a philosophy of 'rights', despite socialist and ecofeminist traditions exposing the Whig roots of this reductionist ethical notion.¹⁶

A masculine-identified text, Jackson's essay rejects a womanist bio-ethic based on the model of caring, calling it 'non-rational' and so by implication, fit for the Western intellectual scrapheap.¹⁷ Moreover, having misconstrued Ruddick's scholarly account of 'the rationality of care', she has no way of redeeming this stance. Thus she passes up the chance of using its leverage in a broader deconstruction of 'malestream' humanism and its discontents. It is difficult to understand Jackson's lingering acceptance of patriarchal judgement here, for she acknowledges with approval the overlap between ecofeminist literature and feminist critiques of science.¹⁸

Perhaps it would help to 'situate' ecofeminist theorizing? In left politics, long captured by intellectual men bodily serviced by women's work, caring has remained invisible and valueless. But while the male body still exists in a theoretical vacuum, ecofeminism has made women's natural processes a site of contestation like no other. For to echo the first ecofeminist premise: women's labour and sexuality is an economic resource, just as much as colonial territories are. In earlier days, socialist feminists were obliged to hold their ground as token men by suppressing talk of the uncultivated body. Where this pressure existed or, if the panic of gender demotion was activated, the mystifying slur of 'essentialism' cast against other feminists was a sure way of shoring up one's socialist-feminist status inside the halls of 'reason'. Ecofeminist writing, which insists that women and men are biological as well as social creatures, is just too threatening an idea in some political contexts. But the raw truth is that we are bodies as well as minds; and bodies embedded in complex ecological linkages—a flux of earth, air, fire and water.

Neo-Colonialism or Self-Determination?

Conservative reactivity also singses Jackson's suggestion that ecofeminist writers succumb to 'orientalism'. So she writes: 'A dichotomy is presented

¹⁵ Sociology has been slow to acknowledge the relative autonomy of biology: presumably a legacy of the profession's grandfather, Durkheim, and his construction of a social reality *sui generis*. For a good decade, ecofeminist writing has been under attack over its defiance of the nature/culture dualism. However, the recent appearance of M. Redclift and T. Benton, eds, *Social Theory and the Global Environment*, London 1994, shows the sociologists themselves now coming around to our view.

¹⁶ For a socialist-feminist argument on 'rights' see Parveen Adams and Jeffrey Minson, 'The Subject of Feminism', *mlf*, vol. 2, 1978, and for an ecofeminist one, Marti Kheel, 'The Liberation of Nature', *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 7, 1985, pp. 135–49.

¹⁷ See also Janet Biehl, *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics*, Boston 1991. Compare also exchanges between Daniel Faber and James O'Connor, Lori Thrupp, Ariel Salleh and Martin O'Connor in *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, no. 3, 1989.

¹⁸ Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths', p. 133.

in which the indigenous is valued and the exotic or introduced is devalued.¹⁹ But ecofeminist ideas emerge from a spontaneous ground swell of women from disparate cultures and classes across several continents, often with no knowledge of each other's work. Thus, ecofeminism is not a product of the orientalizing 'colonial gaze', but in fact, reverses that gaze by joining with indigenous knowledges in a long overdue deconstruction of the West.²⁰ Jackson might also ask herself who first formulated the concept of orientalism and for what social advantage? But her essay does not question this concept which now serves Western developmentalist values so well. Rather, in a move that demeans a committed and powerful post-colonial thinker, Jackson suggests that Shiva's ecofeminist work might be celebrated simply because of her Indian name.

Lapsing with regard to ethnicity, gender and speciesism in language, Jackson's article dubs ecofeminist examples of dispossession—Chipko or the Kenya Green Belt movement—'sacred cows'.²¹ Then, in order to create its distance from the colonial gaze, her text throws doubt on whether such Third World political efforts can be properly called 'feminist'. By saying this, Jackson herself enunciates a form of orientalism. Since to assert that only Western women could arrive at a notion of feminism is tantamount to saying that while Europeans may have 'cuisine', Africans have 'village cooking'.

Jackson expresses a naive neutralist attitude to technology transfer, oblivious to its key role in neo-colonialism. Her reasoning also comes across as if white men's economics is the only kind. A look at how indigenous economic systems might be viable in their own right and how Western peoples might learn from them would overcome this tacitly racist assumption. In practical terms, hunter-gatherers would have to be the affluent societies par excellence. They are self-sufficient and thus genuinely autonomous. They have a stable interchange with their habitat; use low-impact technologies; work few hours a day; and give energies to social bonds, ceremony and art. Socialists and ecofeminists taking a lesson from the rationality of indigenous cultures might discover how to devise low-demand, low-impact economies where sustainability and social equity can go together.

Closing the gap between rich and poor nations will depend on the industrial West scaling down taken for granted levels of resource use, but that alternative is yet to take hold. Ghosts of corporate-speak are everywhere it seems, even in discussions of feminist and indigenous self-determination. No surprise then, that Jackson's notion of emancipation is pre-Marxist and tied to the liberal logic of 'rights'. Her bourgeois image of

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 129.

²⁰ Indigenous and other so-called Third World ecofeminists speak for themselves, though given constraints of language and distance, we may or may not get to hear them. Metropolitan ecofeminists tell their own experience, but in helping undermine the Eurocentric development paradigm from inside, they reinforce radical politics at the periphery. Differences between black and white skinned women should not be fetishized. More than one Western ecofeminist has experienced life as an exogamous wife—a white subaltern, subaltern, so to speak. The essay by Maori activist Ngahuia Te Awekotuku in Caldecott and Leland, *Reclaim the Earth*, is instructive.

²¹ Jackson, p. 126

feminism and ecology as competing issues is quite common among mainstream feminists, if not socialists, but it rests in a sociology long due for re-examination. To treat socialism, ecology, and feminism as separate political problematics is to adopt a single-issue, pluralist model of political action and a zero-sum functionalist view of how benefits are socially distributed. To fear that women may lose power if other creatures gain standing, is to remain locked into the virile concept of 'power over', rather than investigate the synergistic potential of 'power with'.

Still in the embrace of enlightened man's division of humanity from other species, Jackson's essay presents Mies as dualistic, thereby turning ecofeminist politics inside out. In fact, Mies's rejection of a self-determination, purchased at cost to other groups, is precisely a rejection of the instrumental self/other, subject/object set implicit in any appropriative class hierarchy. While it is true that ecofeminists may redefine self-determination in a bio-ethical sense, Jackson is in error to think that they thereby relinquish women's struggles over female infanticide or domestic violence.²² Both are major themes in ecofeminist writing, which seeks to understand why femininity is so often not culturally valued. While endorsing both men and women's place as ecological beings, ecofeminism challenges the common androcentric classification of women 'as nature' and men 'as history'. Without recourse to ecofeminist insights, how does Jackson explain this strange phenomenon?

In the present conjuncture, socialist and feminist precepts cry out for revision. Transnational corporate expansion is not only resourcing foreign lands, but using biotechnology to mine the human body itself. As FINRRAGE activists were quick to anticipate, women's reproductive capacities are in the front line of the latest market onslaught, based on cellular bio-prospecting. While Jackson portrays Mies' comment on feminist wage struggles as indifference to the plight of women's self-determination, an astute Mies notes that already, with the arrival of late capitalism 'the bourgeois individual is in process of eliminating itself'—a revolutionary train has left the station, but we radicals are not driving.²³

Structuralist Idealism

Ecofeminists do fight for women's rights to be enjoyed, not in grand Thatcherite isolation, but embedded in a web of communal mutuality. In this respect, Mies carries forward a much neglected Marxist theory of internal relations, while Shiva's account of women farmers and forest-dwellers on the Indian subcontinent is an unparalleled application of internal relations to ecology.²⁴ However, Jackson's implicit Whig politics, means that she can only read Mies's position as a renunciation of self-determination, whereas Mies's ethic is socialist in the deepest sense of that word.

Jackson thinks that Mies and Shiva over-generalize the situation of Western and Third World women, and in addition, accept what they say

²² Besides Mies and Shiva, see Caldecott and Leland, *Reclaim the Earth*

²³ Mies and Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, p. 216. FINRRAGE stands for the Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering.

²⁴ Especially Shiva, *Slaying Alive*, London 1989.

at face value. Forgetting reflexivity, but in good structuralist form, she asserts that as theorists, we should tease out the space between women's perceptions and 'actually existing reality'. Dismissing what living women say about their lives as 'myth making', Jackson calls for objectivity. Rather than see insights of the dispossessed as intrinsically, organically, and thereby objectively political, Jackson will interpose the 'theorist' to make a 'critical social analysis'. The scientism of this stance is unusual in feminism, which has been especially sensitive to links between the personal and the political. It also belies Jackson's earlier endorsement of the gendered critique of science.

Like the work of many sociology professionals, Jackson's essay reveals an elitist attitude to theory. The very dichotomization of 'theory' versus 'myth' speaks this hierarchy of knowledges. Yet at the same time, her writing shows a curious indulgence towards relativizing postmodern efforts at deconstruction. Perhaps the missing link is the idealism shared by structuralist socialism and postmodern discourse analysis? Jackson discusses knowledge in a top-down way, rather than seeing it grow out of bodily exchanges with material nature: such as loving and working, to use plain English. Not surprisingly, besides Mies, Shiva, and Apffel Marglin, other sources of 'radical myth' which disturb her, are Rose's *Love, Power, and Knowledge*, (1994), and Plant who writes in the bio-regional magazine *New Catalyst* (1987).

In an uneasy mix of postmodern discourse analysis and structuralist objectivism, Jackson tells the reader: 'I believe perceptions of reality are relativist and plural, but I also believe that one cannot avoid making value judgements about which perceptions are closer to some actually existing reality.'²⁵ While ecofeminists readily adopt a feminist standpoint epistemology, apposite to a politics of oppressed groups, no guidance is provided by Jackson as to what her unavoidable 'value judgements' will rest on.²⁶ Will she fix her social bearings by Taylorist feminism or some variety of socialist orthodoxy? If so, would Jackson adopt such doctrine on faith? How else can she presume to distinguish between theoretical science versus myth? Since she is appraised of the feminist critique of science, none of the latter options seem likely, but what Jackson's value guidelines are, remains unclear.

Though coming from the Left, in some respects, Jackson's contribution to ecological debate is on a par with Bramwell and the Contrarians. She queries whether Green, ecofeminist, and indigenous resistances are really politically progressive and sustains her position by caricature of ecocentric politics. This, apparently rejects self-determination, scientism and instrumentalism while promoting sexual essentialism, myth-making and subsistence utopias. On the other hand, Jackson takes 'the market' at face value, and actually defends employment of women in transnational corporations as liberating. In a classic piece of structuralist mystification redolent of the seventies, she concludes: 'The debates about women's experience, in devel-

²⁵ Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths', p. 139

²⁶ Examples of a feminist standpoint epistemology can be found in Ariel Salleh, 'On the Dialectics of Signifying Practice', *Thesis Eleven*, nos. 5-6, 1982, pp. 72-84; Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, Ithaca 1986

oping countries, of both Structural Adjustment Programmes and the Green Revolution show that women enter markets as gendered subjects and the outcomes depend on other forms of identity and positioning.²⁷

Socialism and Reflexivity

Of course, social theorists must always temper their universalizing claims. There are local differences between feminisms, just as there are multiple socialisms. Again, there are local variations in how women and men relate to each other. Even so, empirical studies show gender oppression more often present than absent, regardless of culture. Jackson knows this, which is why her passion is to bring gender analysis into environmentalism and ensure that women's fragile gains are not sacrificed by Green politics in favour of non-human species. As evinced by masculinist responses in the ecofeminism—deep ecology debate, this remains a very worthwhile project. At the same time, though, her essay expresses intolerance of women's own ecological theorizations. From an ecofeminist point of view, the piece emits an overwhelming sense of déjà vu; not only well-worn arguments out for yet another run, but the gender-positioning of this critical event is all too familiar.

As far as socialist philosophy and practice goes, feminists have spent twenty years challenging its gender blindness, but the Marxist theoretical oligarchy has been slow to rethink socialism in the context of either gender or ecological crisis.²⁸ Will it lean on women comrades to deal with these matters? And to what ends? Consider the title 'Radical Environmental Myths'. What function does it serve but to massage a defensive old-school socialist demeanour in the face of an upstart ecology; while its subtitle 'A Gender Perspective' offers soothing self-congratulation. The irony is that, as Jackson's feminism tilts at ecocentrics who oppose humanist chauvinism, her text may speak the male chauvinism of a socialist Left. To say the least, NLR's publication of Jackson's hasty attack on ecofeminist theorists casts a cloud over the gender reflexivity of both editors and author. 'Positioning' indeed!

The value of Marx's contribution to human self-understanding remains beyond question even as we move to a post-humanist perceptive. Any bio-ethic will need to be complemented by a materialist politics—though clearly not the disembodied legacy of a ventriloquist socialism. Radical ecology deserves theory that is gendered, pushes past single-issue movement thinking, and past the natural law of economic determination 'in the last instance'. But before that lonely hour arrives, will socialists turn their caring hearts to a fair assessment of ecofeminism and how it draws Green, socialist, feminist and indigenous struggles together?

²⁷ Jackson, 'Radical Environmental Myths', p. 131.

²⁸ Perhaps the most succinct record of the British feminist encounter with socialism is Sheila Robotham et al., *Beyond the Fragments*, London 1979; in the USA, Lydia Sargent, ed., *Women and Revolution*, Boston 1981 recorded the experience and in Australia, it was carried by socialist journals like *Arise*. For exchanges between ecofeminism and socialism see Anel Salleh, 'Ideology and Ecology', *Chaos Reaction*, no. 31, 1983; 'The Politics of Representation', *Arise*, no. 91, 1990, pp. 163–9, 'Marxism and Ecofeminism. An Exchange', *Fifth Estate*, vol. 27, 1992, pp. 21–7; *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Post-modern*, London 1996, forthcoming.

Still Stirred by the Promise of Modernity

Ariel Salleh's comment is revealingly angry and abusive; she challenges my environmental credentials¹ and my gender reflexivity; I am sexist, racist, masculinist and massaging 'a defensive old-school socialist demeanour'. Unfortunately this leads her to a perverse reading of my paper, for example my statement that that not all things that women do are feminist is taken as saying that only Western women can arrive at a notion of feminism. Leaving name-calling aside, as far as possible I have grouped together the comments by Mary Mellor and Ariel Salleh in order to keep my reply brief, and deal with their view that I ignore the radical potential of ecofeminism and 'unfairly' group it with ecocentrism and animal rights; that I am afflicted with dualism and fail to recognize the significance of biological and ecological limits; that I defend science and deny the epistemologically privileged position of women in subsistence communities; that self-determination, autonomy, modernity and humanism are inconsistent with a feminist green future.

Both Salleh and Mellor complain that I have not recognized the distinctions within ecofeminism, or the arguments between ecofeminism and ecocentrism. The purpose of the paper was not to review and classify approaches, a process which environmentalists are much given to and which has been well done elsewhere, but to look instead at some common positions in radical environmentalisms. One specific protest of misrepresentation was Salleh's complaint that ecofeminists would not naturalize caste as ecocentrics have done. But a well-known ecofeminist portrays caste as a benign social and political interdependence, and has also represented pollution discourses of menstruation as vital to the continuity of the community and its natural environment.²

¹ Far from thinking ecology an irritating new world view, I have been concerned and intellectually engaged with gender, development and environmental studies and issues for 23 years. I certainly did not intend to suggest that there had been no feminist involvement with Green theory, merely to point out, as indeed Salleh's exclusively ecofeminist references suggest, that this has been a particular sort of engagement, especially with radical feminism, to the exclusion of other approaches to gender and environmental relations. Salleh objects to my 'recent self positioning' as 'oddly uninformed', and whilst I quite like being labelled an ignorant upstart I am afraid the image really reflects the divisions between discourses.

² F. Apfel Marglin, 'Smallpox in Two Systems of Knowledge', in Apfel Marglin and S. Marglin, eds, *Demystifying Knowledge: Development, Culture and Resistance*, Oxford 1990, p. 130, and F. Apfel Marglin and P. C. Mishra 'Women's Blood: Challenging the Discourse of Development' *The Ecologist*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1992)

Some of the confusion in Salleh's understanding of my arguments appears to stem from her failure to see that I try to use the word 'gender' to refer to particular social identities, amongst others, carried by women and men. In these terms, I do not think I have done an injustice to ecofeminists to say that there have been few gendered studies of local knowledges, or that female infanticide and domestic violence are only part of a portrayal of women as universal victims in ecofeminist writings. It is precisely because ecofeminism offers no purchase on the divisions between women, that it cannot approach the problem of how women also oppress other women, or to understand the interaction of gender with other subject identities.

Ecofeminist Politics

I do not contend that environmental movements in the South³ are never feminist, or that they are not an avenue for political protest and expression for rural women, but just that the *representation* of such movements in the West is characterized by assumptions which reflect ecofeminist expectations: that the mere presence of women makes it feminist, that there are no gender relations within the movement, that the objective of the movement is environmental sustainability. In the encounter with Southern environmental movements, Western writers too easily find confirmation of their fantasies. More considered, and often local, work suggests a much more complex picture.⁴ Mellor refers to Gail Omvedt as showing the ecofeminist agenda in women's struggles in Maharashtra, but the article cited⁵ is actually about populist peasant movements and the involvement of women within them in a range of issues—employment rights, 'atrocities' and consciousness-raising, abandoned women, political representation in district-council elections, alternative technology, women's property rights, education and health, campaigns against alcoholism and the restoration of fertilizer subsidies—which are as 'developmentalist' as they are environmentalist. These movements do offer political opportunities to women but an ecofeminist interpretation of them is a fantasy of Western eyes. The dangers of viewing 'peasant' movements with the spectacles of ecocentrism are pointed out by Kumud Sharma, who comments that Chipko, in interacting with Western representations of itself came to lose its original utilitarian and developmentalist stance, and the forest initially protected by women is now the Nanda Devi biosphere reserve from which women are excluded.⁶

It is surely an extraordinary claim that 'ecofeminist ideas emerge from a spontaneous ground swell of women from disparate cultures and classes' when such a small range of work on the South is cited, so few instances of

³ I use the terms South and North, or West, as they are part of current discourses, but with unease since part of what I argue relates to the specificity of the histories of particular countries. I try to indicate which groups in which times and places I refer to, so as to avoid this trap, probably not always successfully.

⁴ See for example M.-P. Garcia Guardilla, 'Ecology Women, Environment and Politics in Venezuela', in S. Radcliffe and S. Westwood, eds, *Viva. Women and Popular Protest in Latin America*, London 1993, pp. 65–87.

⁵ G. Omvedt, 'Green Earth, Women's Power, Human Liberation', in V. Shiva, ed., *Class to Home: Women Reconnect Ecology, Health and Development*, London 1994, pp. 99–112.

⁶ Kumud Sharma, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1994, p. W–8.

ecofeminist action are referred to, and so little scrutiny is given to what is labelled as ecofeminist. There are a handful of authors and movements which are constantly raised as self-evident examples of ecofeminism and little attention has been given to the many Southern writers who have criticized ecofeminism,⁷ or to those who have demonstrated alternatives such as Bina Agarwal's feminist environmentalism.

Salleh also justifies ecofeminist silences on difference with the argument that it is politically necessary to play down internal divisions. But this old and disreputable view has often been used to suppress feminist aspirations in, for example, socialist discourses and in many liberation movements. Political coalitions which recognize difference are an alternative to a totalizing denial of difference.

Salleh contends that I fail to 'distinguish between immanent and transcendent discourse', claiming that Mies and Shiva 'make their case in transcendent voice'. But how should, or does, what she calls the transcendent voice relate to the immanent? These are not unproblematically separate, for the transcendent is voiced in relation to a belief of what the immanent consists of, and the immanent is influenced by transcendent voices of, say, Mies and Shiva. No transcendent voice should be immune to critiques based on other interpretations and experiences of the immanent, and other visions of a better future. For example, it is relevant to the transcendent voice, in which Salleh says that ecofeminists would 'opt out of the exchange society altogether', to point out that their alternative to money, reciprocity, is also a system of exchange.

Essentialism, Dualism, Agency

Salleh protests that I see essentialism in Mies and Shiva where they in fact represent 'women's ecopolitical sensibility as a learned outcome', but the point is that they universalize this sensibility: it is something which all women will learn. Caroline New shows how not only 'cultural ecofeminists' but also 'social ecofeminists' practice radical exclusion by linking, and naturalizing, gendered practices into the male-female dualism.⁸ Salleh asserts that, under actually existing social arrangements, men are in the cash economy and women are not, but these are precisely the generalizations which are unsustainable in the light of the complexity of divisions of labour and engagements with markets in the rural areas of Nigeria, Zimbabwe and India which I am familiar with and which defy such breathtaking simplification.

My objections to ecofeminist positions on bodies are not the product of a general discomfort, as Salleh states, but come from a different approach to embodiment which rejects ecofeminist polarization, pretending as it does that only women have bodies—men may not menstruate but they

⁷ For India, see Meera Nanda 'Is Modern Science a Western, Patriarchal Myth? A Critique of the Populist Orthodoxy', *South Asia Bulletin*, vol. 11, nos 1-2 (1991), pp 32-61, and Bina Agarwal, 'The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 18, no 1 (1992).

⁸ Caroline New, 'Man Bad, Woman Good? Essentialisms and Ecofeminisms', *NLR* 216, pp 79-93.

grow beards, have erections, they age and experience pain—and that the body determines social and environmental relations. For Salleh the experience of mothering leads women to an understanding of how unbounded the individual is and to 'a perceptual maturation readily transferred to an ecological context'. But the experience of unboundedness is an everyday part of all of our existences since we are all enfolded in the lives of others in multiple ways, of which mothering is only one, and to privilege mothering as the route to 'perceptual maturation' is inconsistent with rights to choose sexual orientation and indeed to reject mothering. It is also deeply ethnocentric, as I have argued before, and the transfer of this particular perception of unboundedness to the ecological context is pure speculation. Loving mothers can chop down trees for sale, lesbians can be good gardeners.

Mellor, like many ecofeminists, rejects dualisms yet is deeply entwined with them. Transcendence–immanence is one in which—for her—women are associated with embodiment, embeddedness, with biological and ecological time, with the physicality of everyday life as immanence, whilst transcendence is an illusion, serving male interests. She calls for a critique of the social relations of transcendence. But there is no part of the immanent which does not bear and express the transcendent, and what my paper invited was a social critique of the immanent, so absent from ecofeminism where the immanent is naturalized—'immanence is the *natural* condition of humanity'—and lifted out of history. The dangerous illusion here is to imagine that embedded societies do, or would, relieve women of bearing the burden of the embodiment of us all.

Much of Salleh's commentary exemplifies what I find problematic in ecofeminism. Polarized, dualistic and Western categories of thought are taken as a proxy for actually existing social relations of domination in a way which does not accord with a very large body of work on gendered livelihoods, social life and environmental relations in the South. One example is anthropologist Karin Kapadia's work on women's everyday resistance to Brahman discourses of menstruation in which 'the menstruating woman, like the "untouchable", reveals the karmic "sin" of her previous life in her female gender'.⁹ Brahman women are denied the scriptural knowledge of Brahman men but secretly learn and recite the sacred verses and privately assert their spiritual worth. The social relations of domination do not go uncontested, women are not passive and helpless in the face of a dualistic assertion of their inferior immanence. The denial of agency to women is central to ecofeminist positions on what it is to be a woman,¹⁰ and also curiously absent in their understandings of environmental activism, where women defend their environments because they are biologically or socially programmed to do so. A comparison of Kapadia with ecofeminist Apffel Marglin, writing of menstruation discourses in Kerala and Orissa respectively, is instructive—the former offers an analysis of agency and struggle against explicit devaluation, the latter denies devaluation as a Western perception, erases power, in both caste and gender terms, and presents organic harmony.

⁹ Karin Kapadia, 'Impure Women, Virtuous Men: Religion, Resistance and Gender', *South Asia Research*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1994), p. 185

¹⁰ Caroline New, 'Man Bad, Woman Good', 1995

Masculine Science?

Salleh is confused by, and condemns as masculinist, the view that, despite its failings, science still offers more to the disadvantaged than their alternative of 'indigenous knowledge'. Feminism has an ambivalent relationship to science which finds no discussion in Mies and Shiva's critique of science, which itself displays the features of science they criticize—dualism, reductionism, universalism and romanticism.¹¹

I suspect Salleh wilfully misunderstands the point I tried to make about the nature and politics of representation and authority in a postmodern ambience as a slander against Vandana Shiva's important and influential work. I can only reiterate the view that when authority cannot be claimed from 'evidence' then postmodern legitimacy is accorded on other grounds. The problem of who one speaks for is deeply problematic, as is that of who one listens to, and epistemological privilege is very difficult to accord. There is not a singular 'view from below', apart from the question of the sliding scale of what counts as 'below'.

Similarly, I do not 'dismiss what living women say about their lives as myth making', but tried to draw attention to the problems of what women say and how it is understood. One cannot suspend the interrogation of meaning just because it is—or said to be—spoken by women, or deny the mystification surrounding gender, nor can articulated individual opinions and cultural norms be taken as a direct representation of social actions. My call for 'objectivity' is not a scientism but the view that there is an extra-discursive reality which one struggles to grasp, by triangulating the pluralities of perceptions and discourses, in an increasingly less provisional way.

Subsistence, Sustainability, Social Equity

I agree entirely with Mary Mellor that it is mistaken to polarize 'tradition' and 'modernity' and did not intend to give this impression. Indeed, much of what I say is a critique of the notion that an unchanging traditional way of life exists anywhere, and of this life being taken as a benchmark against which modern Western life is measured. In environmental discourses this often involves a Green primitivism. The denial of social change and history to 'indigenous' peoples and 'subsistence communities' is a key feature of the 'othering' of the South and a long-standing feature of Western social theory.

What divides my position fundamentally from ecofeminism is that I cannot agree that 'there is no real conflict between feminine gender interests and environmental protection'. There seems to me no necessary coincidence of a feminist and a Green agenda for change and considerable evidence for contradictions between gender interests, social justice more broadly, and environmental protection in certain social circumstances. Salleh it seems, does not want to confront the extent to which gender challenges and disrupts Green theorizing and envisioning.

¹¹ Maxine Molyneux and Deborah Lynn Steinberg, 'Mies and Shiva's Ecofeminism: A New Testament?', *Feminist Review*, vol. 49, 1995, pp. 86–107.

Mellor distinguishes between subsistence as a form of production and as a level of consumption. For me, both are problematic. She makes the dubious claim that 'subsistence economies... already represent a sustainable relationship with the natural world' but, even if that was a supportable generalization, I wonder how she sees the problems of, say, life expectancy in the sustainable subsistence economy? The demand of the South, made repeatedly in global environmental dialogues, is that the North cannot, having achieved high standards of living itself, now withhold them from the South, however much we praise their sustainable communities. In similar vein, Salleh says it is tacitly racist to deny that indigenous economic systems are viable in their own right and refers to hunter-gatherer societies as sustainable and socially equitable. I did not say that indigenous societies are not viable, but the 'affluent society' label is inappropriate where many needs go unmet, including those of women, and social justice is questionable. The politics of a position which denies the material security enjoyed in the West to indigenous societies is, to my mind, unacceptable, and the racism inheres rather in the romanticization of poverty in much radical environmental thought. To argue for the rights of poor Southern women to greater material well-being and gender justice is for Salleh a 'trade union mentality' and ecofeminists have confidently decided that the pie of science and technology is poison and that a return to simple, local subsistence is in the interests of Southern women; so the privileged West decides what is best for the rest. On self-determination and autonomy for women, Mellor asks 'what kind of "independence" women could achieve that would be sustainable on a global basis?' I would ask in reply, what kind of sustainability might rest on the dependence, and the ill-being of women?

Salleh is amazed at the view that employment in transnational corporations might benefit some women, yet there has been a long and lively discussion for many years about these questions of industrialization,¹² the Green revolution and commodification. These debates have come out of a reaction to structuralism which takes the subject seriously, and reveal an enormously complex, locally specific and changing picture of gains and losses for individuals and social groups which cannot be reduced to the crude view that these processes are uniformly negative for social justice and well-being.

For Mellor, subsistence is also about consumption levels, and she calls for the West to reduce its consumption in order to 'allow the rest of humanity and other species to survive.' The social consequences of reduced, and locally produced, consumption in the North on the South are difficult to anticipate and will depend on the local and national economies of particular countries and the forms of production involved, but it is far from clear that it would necessarily benefit 'the rest of humanity', let alone 'other species'.

Mellor feels I have an uncritical notion of rationality and of science and that there is 'a huge reservoir of accumulated knowledge in subsistence

¹² On transnationals see, for example, Linda Lim, 'Women's Work in Export Factories: The Politics of a Cause', in Irene Tinker, ed., *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development*, Oxford 1989, pp. 101-22.

communities.' I nowhere deny that people have great and detailed knowledges about their environments, but I do see considerable misunderstanding of these in ecofeminist writings which fail to recognize that 'the close association of indigenous knowledge with "answers" to current environmental problems is frequently ethnocentric, ahistorical and reductionist'¹³ and that everywhere knowledges exist within a political economy of power relations.

Sustainability and social equity can go together but I think it mistaken not to examine the trade-offs between them, for a comfortable assertion of synergy is possibly more of a trap than the careful and locally specific examination of the social distribution of gains and losses from changing environmental relations, and a more circumspect approach to universalizing statements about women, development, nature and environment.

Mellor contends that because humanity has been a concept which has historically represented white, male, bourgeois interests that the 'Western model of modernity based on this "human" is unsustainable ecologically' and she elaborates a peculiar economic caricature of humanity as if the assumptions of neo-classical economics define the human, or render the concept valueless. But we are surely engaged in the constant reformulation of what it is to be human, both consciously and unconsciously, individually and collectively? I cannot see that the concept of humanity has been historically, nor should be in the future, surrendered entirely to the narrow interests she describes. It is possible to be a Green humanist, still, in Sabina Lovibond's words, 'stirred by the promise of modernity'.¹⁴

¹³ David Goodman and Michael Redclift, *Refashioning Nature: Food Ecology and Culture*, London 1991, p. 233.

¹⁴ Kate Soper, *What is Nature?*, Oxford 1995, and Sabina Lovibond, 'Feminism and Postmodernism', *NRA* 178, November–December 1989, pp. 5–28.

Anarchy in Academia

In a period when Anglophone philosophy has been represented as isolated from the European mainland, philosophy in England, America, and Australia in the twentieth century has in fact been remarkably invigorated and decisively shaped by Continental émigrés, beginning with Wittgenstein and including Carnap and Popper. Most of these philosophers came to speak and write English almost as if native to that tongue. They in fact testify to a long and strong link between England and Vienna, and in particular between English philosophy and the Vienna Circle: the philosophical link of a common empiricism and positivism and a conviction that science can be justified, and indeed proves its meaningfulness and rationality, by its embodiment of the empirical method.

One of the latest and greatest of these thinkers was Paul Feyerabend.* As his autobiography tells us, he grew up in Vienna, in a lower middle-class home, and as a young man, though brought up a Catholic, espoused some sort of logical positivism. With Viktor Kraft he helped to found the Kraft Circle as a continuation of the Vienna Circle. However, there were crucial differences between Feyerabend and his Viennese predecessors. They settled in the Anglophone countries in the period between the wars: most of them were refugees from Continental fascism, and for many positivism was an ideology, a political weapon that revealed fascism as irrational mystification, strictly meaningless, and certainly unscientific. Feyerabend, a younger man, came to England after the end of the Second World War, in the early 1950s. He had been a positivist militant in Vienna, but his chief target there seems to have been religion. Certainly, he was not a political refugee.

In Vienna Feyerabend had studied physics, and this and his Viennese background led him naturally into the philosophy of science. The dominant figure in this field in England at the time was an earlier Viennese émigré, Karl Popper. According to the autobiography, Wittgenstein had agreed to supervise Feyerabend's doctorate in England, but when Wittgenstein died it was to Popper that Feyerabend transferred.

Popper's chief contributions to the philosophy of science were his

* Paul Feyerabend, *Killing Time: The Autobiography of Paul Feyerabend*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1995, £18.25 HB, ISBN 0-226-24531-4.

critique of inductivism and his advocacy of falsificationism: roughly, he argued that science is a progressive form of inquiry because it recognizes that scientific theories cannot be verified but can be falsified by the evidence of the senses, a methodology requiring only deductive, not inductive, logic. But Popper was more widely known at the time for his political arguments, the arguments in his books *The Open Society and its Enemies* and *The Poverty of Historicism*. Like many others in that earlier migration of Viennese philosophers, he used his conception of science ideologically. In the process, however, he attacked as unscientific not only fascism but socialism as well, flatly repudiating Marxism's distinctive claim to be 'scientific socialism'.

Feyerabend came to England in 1952 and soon 'fell for' falsificationism. But during his time in his first university post, at Bristol from 1955, and on to Berkeley in 1958, he began to move away from Popper. He developed a cluster of ideas that converged with Thomas Kuhn's in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), though reached independently: the theoretical character of observation statements, the incommensurability of theories, the strategy of demolishing theories in the philosophy of science by confronting them with the actual historical practice of scientists such as Galileo. These ideas decisively undermined falsificationism, and empiricism in general, and in the process undermined also the critique of Marxism that Popper had based on his (mis)conception of science. It's little wonder that the Left took Feyerabend to their hearts.

But he was a restless spirit, like Galileo's Earth always on the move, and was already, characteristically, pushing his ideas to more radical extremes, to the brink of paradox, and beyond. Attempts by philosophers like Popper to formulate norms of rationality, he argued, were bound to fail, and science in particular does not conform to any such norms. In his first and most famous book, *Against Method* (1975, based on a paper completed in 1969), he argued for an anarchist epistemology in which 'Anything Goes'. Not only was science not the embodiment of some abstract rationality, it was not necessarily the only way of acquiring knowledge, or a better way than, say, religion, or myth, or 'alternative' medicine. At Berkeley in the sixties these were explosive ideas, and with his talent for dramatic presentation the student movement saw in Feyerabend a charismatic teacher.

What did he see in them? To what extent was Feyerabend committed to the student movement? According to the autobiography, he adapted his teaching to include discussions of earlier revolutionary movements and their philosophies, citing 'Cohn-Bendit, Lenin's "Left Wing Communism...", essays by Chairman Mao, and Mill's "On Liberty"'. It may seem now that of these it was to be Mill who would exercise most influence on Feyerabend. He approved of much of what was happening but did not wholeheartedly participate. Thus, he says, 'It was a tremendous achievement when the faculty supported the position of the student leaders and forced the administration to withdraw'; but 'I didn't always accept the advice of the student leaders. For example, I didn't participate in the strikes they declared.' He felt solidarity with the students but not with the organizers of the strike. 'They presumed to speak for all students just as Johnson presumed to act for all Americans—the old authoritarianism

again.' Besides, 'I thought a student strike was rather silly...(I have changed my mind since then...). I would have stopped lecturing if my students had demanded it, but when I asked them, some said yes, some said no—and we spent the rest of the time debating the issue.' However, Feyerabend's job was under something of a threat when he moved off campus, a move that 'for some of my colleagues, John Searle especially [the author of *The Campus War*], was the last straw; they wanted to have me fired.' He was saved, he says, by red tape.

To the scientific establishment Feyerabend was a persistent gadfly. In *Nature* in 1987, he was described as 'currently the worst enemy of science'. His mischievous response was to concede that 'modern scientists are every bit the equal of ancient myth-tellers, troubadors and court jesters' (*Scientific American*, May 1993). The book at the centre of the rumpus was *Against Method*, published by NLB and on the dust-cover bearing a photograph of Feyerabend apparently drunk, wearing at a rakish angle what seems to be a tennis cap, and presenting in place of the usual potted biography the author's horoscope. The autobiography devotes a special chapter to his latest thoughts on *Against Method*. 'Today', says Feyerabend, 'I am convinced that there is more to this "anarchism" than rhetoric.' But he has second thoughts about his 'relativism': 'considering how much cultures have learned from each other and how ingeniously they have transformed the material thus assembled, I have come to the conclusion that *every culture is potentially all cultures* and that special cultural features are changeable manifestations of a *single human nature*. This conclusion has important political consequences. It means that cultural peculiarities are not sacrosanct...objectivism and relativism not only are untenable as philosophies, they are bad guides for a fruitful cultural collaboration.' But the hostility and misunderstanding that greeted *Against Method* distressed and depressed him: 'I often wished I had never written that fucking book.'

Perhaps the most widespread misconception about his views, the one encouraged by the phrase that forms the title of another of Feyerabend's books, *Farewell to Reason*, is that he 'denigrated reason'. In the autobiography he insists: 'I never "denigrated reason", whatever that is, only some petrified and tyrannical versions of it.' Further, 'science is not "irrational"'—on Feyerabend's view, 'the arts and sciences become rather similar.' What Feyerabend objected to, always and everywhere, was the deceptive and malign power and influence of excessive abstraction. The later Wittgenstein was more important in his intellectual development than has usually been allowed. Early on, Feyerabend read the *Philosophical Investigations* in manuscript, and wrote in a personal letter that 'the attitude expressed in it somehow became a part of me. What attitude? Anti-theoretical. Anti-large-comprehensive-concepts...' If we want to understand what reason is in science we must be wary of what scientists say and should instead study and preferably participate in what they actually do in the concrete activity of reasoning about some specific issue. If we do this, we shall find that since reasoning is an activity aiming to persuade, scientists employ a wide variety of devices to get people to believe or observe what they otherwise would not have done. But if this holds for reason in science it holds also for the reasoning involved in discussing this view itself. Galileo used trickery, mockery, deceit, jokes,

exaggeration, whatever mischief was available, in a word he was a big-mouth; and in arguing that view Feyerabend accepted that he was a big-mouth himself. Such a policy is of course a recipe for misunderstanding, and the autobiography devotes considerable space to the job of trying to reduce that misunderstanding, and perhaps to modifying and mellowing the more outrageous versions of his ideas.

There can be no doubt that Feyerabend was magnificently endowed for his role of bigmouth. He was a performer, both as a writer and as a lecturer, and whenever else he got the opportunity. The autobiography is full of his passion for the theatre and opera, not just as a member of the audience but as a player. He had a good trained tenor voice—'a world voice', he claims, perhaps seriously, and certainly without false modesty; and at one stage of his career he was invited to become an assistant to Brecht. Even in the midst of real battle, in the fighting on the Russian front in the last months of the war, Feyerabend could not give up 'playing the operatic hero once again.' But on this occasion his 'carelessness finally caught up' with him. Taking up an exposed position directing traffic at a crossroad, he was struck and crippled by three bullets. Thereafter he walked on crutches, suffered persistent ill-health and excruciating pain all his life—a fact disclosed in his widow's postscript, Feyerabend himself having omitted to mention it—and was sexually impotent.

Feyerabend did not let such trifles deter him. He had four wives and many mistresses, to say nothing of an impressive collection of academic chairs and other university posts on three continents, and a mischievous sense of humour, unwithered by his wounds, that found in academia a rich array of targets for his mockery and self-mockery: 'I am getting famous,' he wrote to me in 1975, 'the Big Fakes of the world recognize me as one of their own.' The crutches and their implications notwithstanding, he leaves an impression of restless and tireless mobility, both intellectual and physical: vitality enough for at least two fit and ordinary people, and an enviable capacity for enjoying life.

But there was a different way in which the war figured in Feyerabend's experience. 'I began my autobiography,' he tells us, 'mainly to recall my time in the German army and the way I had experienced National Socialism.' 'For me,' he says, 'the German occupation [of Austria] and the war that followed were an inconvenience, not a moral problem.' 'I... cannot undo my wavering and unconcern during the Nazi period. Nor do I think that I can be blamed or held responsible for my behaviour...' In the light of such matters it has been said of Feyerabend that there was a 'missing piece' in his personality: that morality was missing, that he lacked a moral sense. This view, I think, ignores two connected features to be found in the autobiography.

First, as Joe McCartney has pointed out in a review of the autobiography due to appear in *Radical Philosophy*, under the sparkling surface of Feyerabend's story of his adventures, there lies a deeper theme, providing the book with its general structure: the theme of a *Bildungsroman*, a chronicle of apparently unconnected episodes through which develops a coherent and balanced moral character, invested with wisdom and in particular

with a heightened sense of the value of personal relationships. Reflecting on his days in Bristol, where he began his professional career as an academic, Feyerabend says: 'Almost all my actions were tentative, unfinished, without an overall purpose ... There were long stretches of loneliness and boredom when I wandered around ... hoping that somebody, preferably a woman, would appear to set things right ... I shrivelled when thrown back on my own resources ... I was truly "killing time". In a way I was waiting for my life to begin ... Slowly, very slowly, the situation changed. My activities, interests, the things I wrote, said, attended to began to merge. It was like becoming a person with a character, an attitude, a point of view, and relatively stable aims ...'. Feyerabend did not lack a moral sense, but it took time for his moral sense to develop.

Secondly, when his moral sense developed it had a particular shape, a shape reflecting his overall philosophical position. What he objected to was a form, or deformation, of morality so widespread and general that he may have appeared to be shunning or ignoring morality as such. In fact, his target in morality as in philosophy was excessive abstraction: he insisted that concreteness and context are essential. As early as the first paragraph of the autobiography he notes that whereas Austrians had originally welcomed Hitler and the unification with Germany in 1938, at the fiftieth anniversary of these events he heard 'stern condemnations and resounding humanitarian appeals. Not all ... dishonest; still, they seemed ... rather futile. I ascribed this to their generality, and I thought that a personal report might be a better way of looking at history.' Though without acknowledgement, Feyerabend was here following a notable precedent, and one with radical political implications. Marx also has been widely interpreted as rejecting morality as such, when in fact his target strongly resembles Feyerabend's: that target was moral *idealism*, the tendency to conceive of morality in terms of ideals, such as Fraternity, in various ways abstracted from their practical and historical contexts. For example, speaking of 'communist artisans', Marx asserts in the 1844 *Manuscripts* that 'the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them but a fact of life'.

Feyerabend not only believed in the necessity of concreteness in morality, he enacted the transition from abstract to concrete in the *Bildungsroman* pattern of his own life. In Bristol he was hoping for somebody, preferably a woman, to appear and set things right. That hope was eventually fulfilled, more richly than he could have imagined, by the quite exceptional woman who lit up the last decade of his life, the last five years as his fourth wife. Grazia Borrini was an Italian physicist who on moral grounds gave up a promising career in physics in order to devote herself to work in conservation and development. From her, Feyerabend learned by experience 'that there are strong inclinations after all, that they are not about abstract things such as solitude or intellectual achievements but about a live human being ... at long last I have learned what it means to love somebody ... the long days with Grazia ... turned me from an icy egotist into a friend, a companion, a husband'.

Feyerabend and Grazia sought medical help in the hope of having children, but without success. As things turned out they were denied not only children: Feyerabend's 'long days with Grazia' were cruelly cut short by

an inoperable brain tumour. He died in February 1994, a month after his seventieth birthday. In a masterpiece of dramatic timing, his autobiography also was virtually complete. It ends with the words: 'My concern is that after my departure something remains of me, *not* papers, *not* final philosophical declarations, but love...not intellectual survival but the survival of love'. No flat platitude this, but the hard-won legacy of a lifetime's effort, experience, and thought.

Thus this extraordinary man, the *enfant terrible* of modern English-speaking philosophy, brings to a close the Anglo-Viennese chapter, and with it much else besides. It is, to put it mildly, an unexpected conclusion: a turn up, as they say, for the books. But that's Feyerabend—a world voice all right', and till the end refusing to conform to expectations. We shall not see his like again.

Concerning this book, a curious and compelling mixture, or collage as Feyerabend would probably have called it, we have it on the authority of Grazia's postscript that there are 'important aspects of Paul's life hardly mentioned' in it. For some of these omissions Feyerabend no doubt had his own good reasons. Others were closer to being inadvertent. For instance, though he presumably kept photographs, thirty-one of which are reproduced in the autobiography, he never kept a diary, nor any letters, 'not even from Nobel Prize winners'. He relied heavily on memory, which of course sometimes, as he confesses, let him down. It is to be hoped that his correspondents were less cavalier with his letters than he was with theirs.

Acknowledgement

Tom Naum's article, 'Breakwaters of 2000 From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism', NLR 214, appeared in a slightly shorter version in *Quinn's Quarterly*, Summer 1995, edited by Heather Kiernan. The editors apologize for this omission.

new review

THE GHOSTS OF YUGOSLAVIA

James Petras
Steve Vieux

Lethal Power Play in Bosnia

Dubravka Ugresic

The Confiscation of Memory

Gregor McLennan

Four Sins of Modernism

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pre-communist past; it is the result of transforming a socialist society to a market economy and democracy. A critical element of this failure was economic decline, caused largely by a programme intended to resolve a foreign debt crisis. More than a decade of austerity and declining living standards corroded the social fabric and the rights and securities that individuals and families had come to rely on.²⁷

Austerity measures designed by the Western lending institutions contributed to the war in the Balkans in three ways. First, IMF policies exacerbated inter-republican rivalries and animosities. Second, the austerity measures increased the inflammability of social relations throughout Yugoslavia as the measures increased misery and desperation. Finally, the measures themselves generated a layer of unemployed or under-employed angry and frustrated youth of war-making age, ideal cannon-fodder for nationalist demagogues.

Like much of the Third World, Yugoslavia ran up sizeable debts in the 1970s as it sought to cope with the economic consequences of rising oil prices and the declining markets for its manufactured goods in the West.²⁸ Further hikes in the price of oil, and the cut-off of commercial lending, spurred the country to pursue IMF lending. With much local intellectual and political backing—including the support of one-time bank director and neo-liberal Slobodan Milosevic—an IMF-guided stabilization program was implemented in stop-and-go fashion during the 1980s, with long periods of austerity from 1982 to 1985 and from 1987 into the early 1990s.²⁹

Stabilization programmes attempt to improve the trade position of a country by reducing internal demand; invariably living standards suffer as the stabilizing government cuts government employment, reduces consumption subsidies, privatizes services and so on. Yugoslavia was no exception. Food subsidies were dropped in 1982. In 1983 the prices for gasoline, heating fuel, food and transportation rose by a third. The government froze investment in infrastructure and social services. Private firms were unable to take up the employment slack under the pressure of high interest rates. Family income fell to a twenty-year low. Unemployment rose to 14 per cent on average, with 23 per cent unemployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in parts of Serbia including Belgrade.³⁰ Under the impact of the plans, the rate of growth of industrial production averaged 2.8 per cent in 1987–88 and fell to –10.6 per cent in 1990. Real wages fell by 41 per cent in the first six months of 1990; inflation was over 70 per cent. Under the impact of the IMF program in the first nine months of 1990, 600,000 workers out of a workforce of 2.7 million had been laid off.³¹

The misery of stabilization made large masses of citizens available for political mobilization at the same time as the wholehearted submission to IMF policy by 'communists' and 'socialists' undermined the credibility

²⁷ Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, Washington, DC 1995, p. 15; see also Catherine Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered*, New York 1995, pp. 61–5.

²⁸ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, pp. 46–7.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 67–8, 82, 96; Michel Chossudovsky, 'Dismantling Former Yugoslavia: Recolonizing Bosnia', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. xxxi, no. 9, 2 March 1996.

³⁰ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p. 51.

³¹ Chossudovsky, 'Dismantling Former Yugoslavia', pp. 521–2.

perspective, was not the defeat of Iraq but the construction of the military alliance under US leadership, particularly the entry and subordination of Europe and Japan to US-defined strategic goals. The apogee of this strategy was the military victory itself because shortly thereafter the formidable wartime alliance began to disintegrate as Japan, Germany and even the Middle Eastern countries began to pursue their own interests. Bush's proclamation of a US-centred New World Order was short-lived. The triumph was built on conjunctural events that left open the question of continued US hegemony in Europe and elsewhere. A military victory in the Middle East did not affect the decay of the Atlantic Alliance.

Subsequently, the Bush Administration, supported by a majority of Congress and the principal media outlets, joined the task of shaping public opinion to support US intervention in Somalia. Again the focus was upon breaking the domestic constraints on global empire building. The key code words in this case were 'hunger', and 'tribal' or 'clan warfare.' As images of starving children flooded the news media, Bush and the media literally staged a US Marine landing, with television cameras grinding and the Stars and Stripes waving. Once again, a 'peaceful humanitarian mission' with battle helicopters and armoured personnel carriers involved the US Armed Forces in direct combat. The Clinton Administration took over and attempted to define the military intervention as a broader mission of 'creating democracy,' but Congressional and public support evaporated amidst rising US military casualties.

Once again the effort to project US power ended in failure. Instead of easing US public and Congressional anxiety about a new era of US 'world leadership,' Somalia had a boomerang effect: new efforts at overseas involvement would have to address the fact that even low-level casualties were unacceptable to the public and a firm cut-off date would become an established norm of operation. The effort to put the US military command at the head of a multilateral force capable of intervening throughout the world failed. The loss of the US capacity to exercise a global policing role set the stage for Western European politicians intent on establishing their own 'regional leadership' to intervene politically and militarily.

The Break-up of Yugoslavia: The European Initiative

Of all the Western mendacity and hypocrisy surrounding the plight of the ex-Yugoslav Republic, none is more obscene than the notion that the break-up was the result of 'age-old hatreds' and 'ancient' feuds in a violent and volatile Balkan region. This was a convenient lie covering up three basic facts.

First, that these 'hate-filled' peoples had lived, married, studied, struggled and worked peacefully together for almost a half century prior to the so-called ethnic wars.

The second fact is the central role of the West, particularly international lending institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, in generating the social and economic preconditions for explosive ethnic conflict. As one observer of the Balkan Wars put it:

The conflict is not a result of historical animosities and it is not a return to the

While the US did not rule out collective military responses, they were seen as dependent on Washington's initiative and leadership: 'Only a nation that is strong enough to act decisively can provide the leadership that is needed to encourage others to resist aggression... [collective security] worked in the [Persian Gulf] because the United States was willing and able to provide... leadership. While the US cannot become the world's policeman... neither can we allow our critical interests to depend solely on international mechanisms that can be blocked by countries whose interests may be very different from our own.'

US policy-makers operated under a severe internal constraint: a tenacious majority of the US public was opposed to providing financial and military support to sustain Washington's globalism. US citizens plainly rejected the idea that the US should, as one observer summed it up, 'maintain its traditional hegemonic role in the free world, or, in the wake of the Cold War to impose a world-wide Pax Americana.'²³ A poll by the Times Mirror Center for the Press and the People in June 1995 found that 13 per cent of the population said they wanted the US to be 'the single world leader.' In an NBC/*Wall Street Journal* Poll of October 1993 72 per cent said the 'United States should let other countries and the United Nations take the lead in solving international crises and conflicts.'²⁴ The growing concern for domestic issues was evident in a Program for International Policy Alternatives Poll at the University of Maryland in January 1995 in which 86 per cent said that 'taking care of problems at home is more important than giving aid to foreign countries.'²⁵

So there was an overwhelming need to artificially create a 'moral imperative' to erode this powerful domestic opinion which increasingly perceived US global ambition as the source of domestic decay.²⁶ After the Cold War, well-financed global military adventures, often coupled with dubious humanitarian missions, seemed more and more incomprehensible to a public increasingly aware of the worsening economic situation in the US. To justify military actions aimed at reasserting US global leadership in the 1990s, Washington successfully enlisted the mass media to provide moral cover and use selective indignation at some war crimes to abet others.

The reassertion of US global hegemony was built on a new consensus in Washington which sought to prove that its military power was indispensable in the 'settlement' of regional disputes, thus negating the viability of any alternative security system that excluded the US. To this end, Washington planned and sponsored three military interventions, in the Gulf, Somalia and Bosnia. In the Gulf and Somalia, Washington sought to demonstrate its 'world leadership' qualities, and in Bosnia to prove decisively the failure of European security systems and the indispensability of NATO and US hegemony in Europe.

The Gulf War and Somalia

The most significant fact about the Gulf War, from Washington's strategic

²³ Steven Kull, 'What the Public Knows that Washington Doesn't', *Foreign Policy*, no. 101, Winter 1995-96

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ James Petras and Morris Modley, *Empire or Republic?*, New York 1995

Maastricht. Such a development may threaten to displace the dollar as the prime instrument of international business and as the 'denominator of international financial investments.'¹⁸ More tightly integrated European markets and the rise of a European currency might render the Europeans less vulnerable to exchange rate manipulations by the US. The threat of European monetary union has led to 'aggressive hostility' on the part of Wall Street and the US Treasury.¹⁹ The US Treasury Department ignored Maastricht, to the point of refusing to lobby it on behalf of US business as vigorously as it might have. It has also stoutly opposed meeting with EC officials, intent on maintaining its contacts with the finance ministers of individual European states.²⁰

US Departments of State and Defense have adamantly opposed giving the European Council—an organization of EC heads of state—any voice in security decisions, viewing it as a too independent, cumbersome and politically divided caucus. The US also made clear its irritation with the Eurocorps. Once the Germans and French stipulated that the Eurocorps was no challenge to NATO's pre-eminence, US opposition softened. Nevertheless, some concluded that 'no form of military coordination among EC states was acceptable to the United States.'²¹

NATO in Search of Justification

So after 1989, top-level US strategic planners faced a serious challenge: how to sustain US global supremacy in the absence of an external enemy justifying European subordination to NATO. The most systematic, explicit statement of the strategy of global dominance appeared in a document prepared by officials from the State Department and the Pentagon in conjunction with the National Security Council and in consultation with the President and his senior foreign policy advisors in February 1992, entitled 'Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) in Fiscal Year 1994-1999'. The DPG interpreted the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European empire together with the military victory over Iraq as a unique opportunity for empire building. These 'victories' created a 'new international environment,' reaffirmed 'US global leadership' and 'integrated' competitor allies Germany and Japan into a 'collective security' system under US leadership. The DPG was explicit in its opposition to a European security organization that could replace NATO, thus diminishing US authority over the continent:

NATO continues to provide the indispensable foundation for a stable security environment in Europe. Therefore it is of fundamental importance to preserve NATO as the primary instrument of Western defence and security, as well as the channel for US influence and participation in European security affairs. While the United States supports the goal of European integration, we must seek to prevent the emergence of Europe-only security arrangements which would undermine NATO, particularly the alliance's integrated command structure.²²

¹⁸ Henning, 'European Monetary Union and the United States'

¹⁹ It has been claimed that this hostility led to the organization of speculative attacks on European currencies in autumn 1992 by Wall Street analysts and currency traders. See Mark Nelson, 'Transatlantic Travails', *Foreign Policy*, no. 92, Fall 1993, pp. 81-2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²² Excerpts from DPG reprinted in Patrick Tyler, 'US Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop', *New York Times*, 8 March 1992, p. 14.

higher forms of integration.¹³ This provided a favourable matrix for sustaining a purely European military alliance. Finally, the collapse of the USSR and Gorbachev's policy of handing over Eastern Europe to the West stimulated a competitive race between Europe—primarily Germany—and the US for a bigger piece of the economic and political pie. Germany, with its powerful economy and 'historical proximity' to the East, took a major role, annexing the former German Democratic Republic and becoming the leading financier of the former Soviet Union.¹⁴

These developments fused into a crucial precedent-setting conjuncture in the early 1990s. This was a particularly important period since European cooperation was expanding into much deeper economic and political integration. As one observer put it: 'two intergovernmental conferences—on economic and monetary union and on political union—were in full swing, and two important treaties were being negotiated. The Conference on Political Union obviously looked on Yugoslavia as a challenge and an opportunity to demonstrate the Community's ability to design and carry out common foreign and, more ambitiously, a common security policy.'¹⁵ In short, this was a period of institutional and policy formation in which precedents would be set with potentially weighty consequences for the future shape of both European security policy and the influence of the US.

US Views of European Integration

How did US elites respond to this conjuncture? Among US policy elites three positions on US relations with the EC have emerged. The traditionalist view argues that European integration is good for the US and seeks to promote and defend it. A second view insists that the EC must share more of the military burden so that the US may contribute less. A third, sceptical, position argues that EC integration is likely to be unfavourable to the US which must vigilantly defend its national interests in the face of this process. It must in fact 'disrupt community consensus if such consensus might operate against US self-interests.' While the traditional view provides much of the public-relations vocabulary of US-EC relations and the 'burden-sharing' position is widely held, the sceptical viewpoint is becoming more widespread in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹⁶ This view draws upon a long-established foreign policy perspective among American elites this century which has viewed a self-confident, politically independent Western Europe as a threat to US hegemony.¹⁷

Aside from agriculture, a key area of contention involves potential competition with the dollar by the new European currency envisioned at

¹³ Charles P. Kindleberger, 'Europe in the World Economy', in Mario Baldassarri and Robert Mundell, eds, *Building the New Europe*, vol. 1, London 1993, p. 628; Simon Bulmer and William Paterson, 'Germany in the European Union: Gentle Giant or Emergent Leader', *International Relations*, no. 72, 1996, pp. 14–20.

¹⁴ James Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, New York 1995, p. 44; James Petrus, 'East Germany: Conquest, Pillage and Disintegration', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1992).

¹⁵ Mihajlo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, Montreal 1994, p. 190; Steinberg, 'The Response of International Institutions', p. 256.

¹⁶ Stanley Sloan, 'US-West European Relations and Europe's Future', in Harrison, ed., *Europe and the US*.

¹⁷ David Calleo, *Beyond American Hegemony*, New York 1987, pp. 32–3.

capitalism by protecting resources and markets globally from revolutionary regimes.⁵

Europe is today the largest market for US goods.⁶ The EC is the most important destination for US direct foreign investment. Affiliates of US multinationals in Europe produce more goods and services and earn more profit in Europe than in any other part of the world.⁷ It is a crucial market for US computers and office equipment, heavy machinery, electrical equipment and entertainment products.⁸ Just how crucial the European market is became evident in the late 1980s when the US reduced its trade deficit from \$170 billion in 1986 to \$66 billion in 1991: trade with the EC accounted for 40 per cent of the reduction.⁹

By the late 1970s and the early 1980s Europe in general and Germany in particular were successfully competing with the US in world markets. The international position was strengthened by the massive market within Europe; the economy of the fifteen EU members combined is 20 per cent larger than the US economy.¹⁰ While this in no way led to a direct challenge to NATO, it did strengthen the material foundations for a separate and distinct security system apart from the US.

It was not long before the idea of a purely European security system surfaced in various guises, such as the French and German sponsored Eurocorps or the Western European Union.¹¹ The Maastricht summit strengthened such trends, insisting that European foreign policy would 'include all questions related to the Security of the European Union, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence.'¹² The official rhetoric on both sides was benign. Europeans assured Washington that NATO was crucial to European security, and Washington encouraged Europe to take more responsibility for its own defence. Because of increasing budget deficits and increasingly unfavourable external accounts, the European initiative gained US supporters. US policy-makers were caught in a rhetorical bind of publicly supporting the system while privately seeking to subordinate or limit its role as against that of NATO.

Developments in the economic and political sphere were moving in the same direction. Germany took charge of pushing the EC forward to

⁵ Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, pp. 164–74.

⁶ United States Department of Commerce, *Survey of Current Business*, June 1995, pp. 92, 94.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 63.

⁸ Louise Van Tarrwyck-Novoy, *The United States and the European Community*, Lanham, Maryland 1992, pp. 106–7.

⁹ Raymond J. Ahearn, 'US Access to the EC-92 Market: Opportunities, Concerns and Policy Challenges', in Glennon J. Harrison, ed., *Europe and the US*, Armonk, NY 1994.

¹⁰ C. Randal Henning, 'European Monetary Union and the United States', *Foreign Policy*, no. 102, Winter 1995–96, p. 94.

¹¹ James Scheinberg, 'The Response of International Institutions to the Yugoslavia Conflict: Implications and Lessons', in F. Stephen Larrabee, ed., *The Volatile Powder Keg*, Washington, DC 1994, pp. 267–8.

¹² Cited in David Garnham, 'The United States and the European Community', *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1992), p. 57.

movements and to confront the consolidation of pro-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe. The formation of 'regional alliances' throughout the world was a central element of US strategy.¹ Subsequently, the Atlantic Alliance served a multiplicity of purposes beyond its initial 'security function.'² The end of the Cold War, the victory of the West and the collapse of communist regimes called into question the original security premises upon which NATO had been founded. As a consequence, a major linchpin in the structure of the 'informal' empire was much weakened. Thus, amidst severe questioning by European allies, began the search for a justification of NATO. Doubts were reinforced by economic actors in Europe seeking to limit US economic influence. By the early 1990s it appeared that NATO was on the road to extinction with all the profound repercussions this would have for US aspirations to sustain world leadership and global hegemony.

The reversal of this trend took shape in an unanticipated fashion, staged in a marginal nation of a multi-ethnic state. The disintegration of the Yugoslav confederation and the subsequent emergence of warring ethnic mini-states formed the background for the revitalization of NATO and the re-emergence of US hegemony in Europe. At the cost of tens of thousands of lives, the US blocked European peace initiatives in order to safeguard its political 'leadership' on the continent via NATO. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher stated the principle which has guided US policy from the beginning: 'There will be no peace agreement in Bosnia unless NATO and the United States, the United States in particular, take the lead in the implementation of a peace agreement.'³ To understand how the US fomented a human tragedy while capturing the moral high ground in its effort to regain primacy in Europe, it is worthwhile briefly summarizing the new configuration of US-European relations so as to locate the Bosnian issue in its proper historical context.

NATO, the Cold War and US Hegemony

From the start, NATO was designed to allow the shaping of European political and economic policies to fit the larger design of US ambitions.⁴ NATO allowed for the continuance of military bases in Europe and a massive US military presence. This in turn created a historic opportunity to open the door for US trade and the expansion of US multi-national corporations. While the US government paid the bill and European governments collaborated, US corporations targeted Europe as the highest priority area for investment and trade. This ensured vigorous containment policies against the Soviet Union and throughout the world, not only to defend US interests, but to ensure the future health of European

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941-47*, New York 1972, pp. 152-63.

² Melvyn Leffler, 'National Security and Foreign Policy', in Melvyn Leffler and David Painter, eds, *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*, London 1991, Gabriel Kolko and Joyce Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954*, New York 1972.

³ United States Congress Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Peace Process in the Former Yugoslavia*, 104th Congress, First Session, 17 October and 1 December 1995, p. 5.

⁴ Kolko and Kolko, *The Limits of Power*; Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, Stanford 1992.

Bosnia and the Revival of US Hegemony

The primary concern of US policy-makers, Democrats and Republicans, since the Second World War has been 'world leadership'. Where necessary and possible domestic issues have been subordinated to the overarching goal of constructing and sustaining US hegemony over allies, confrontation with adversaries and domination of clients. Various international organizations and treaties were formalized embodying these goals. Military, economic and cultural institutions were created for the purpose of furthering Washington's strategic advantage following its victories over its capitalist rivals and later its confrontation with the Soviet Union and Third World revolutionaries.

US trade and multinational corporations have flourished under the umbrella of political and military hegemony. The principal arena for US trade and investment, and a strategic ally in sustaining the capitalist world economy, is Western Europe. Washington's first concern in the aftermath of the Second World War was to defeat indigenous communist or revolutionary nationalist

and these were very different from contemporary First World gay and lesbian communities—colonization brought a degree of homogeneity as indigenous cultures were suppressed or forced to adapt. Drucker describes the rise of Third World gay and lesbian activism, and argues that to progress further and found lasting gay and lesbian communities there must be substantial economic amelioration. Given this, it could be that gay and lesbian interests are aligned with those of the Left. Unfortunately the Left's record on gay and lesbian rights has been poor—as in Cuba. Nevertheless, a successful alliance was forged in Nicaragua, and this could serve as a model for future developments.

In NLR 205 Roger Burbach explained the background to the peasant uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas; in this issue Régis Debray reports on his recent visit and conversations with Subcommandante Marcos.

In disputes which employ postmodern jargon, to accuse any theory of reductionism, functionalism, essentialism or universalism is sufficient to dismiss it entirely. These accusations have, of course, frequently been levelled at Marxism. In a close reading of Michèle Barrett's *The Politics of Truth*, Gregor McLennan makes the case for all of these despised terms which, he argues, are essential to any useful form of intellectual activity. The postmodern celebration of particularity, for instance, is self-defeating because any account of one level of the particular can be undercut by some even more particularistic analysis; without a more general theory it is impossible to tell when to stop. McLennan concludes by exploring possible common ground between post-Marxist theory and a complex and nuanced Marxism which has taken account of postmodern analyses of description and understanding.

Dave Beech and John Roberts analyze recent trends in leftist aesthetics, much influenced by Adorno, which have sought to defend the autonomy of the aesthetic and give it an ethical component. Even theorists previously committed to radical versions of the social history of art have come to some accommodation with conservative, formalist thinking. Beech and Roberts argue for a realization that art—especially in its claim to autonomy—is irretrievably immersed in the social and political world. The world may have as much, or more, to say about art as art has to say about the world. Given this, philistine objections to an art that refuses to recognize its connection with the world can make a good deal of sense.

Finally Neal Ascherson's recent book on the Black Sea is reviewed by Liuba and Georgi Derluguian, and Kate Soper furnishes an eloquent account of Gillian Rose's autobiography, *Love's Work*.

In recent issues of the Review we have published a number of articles analyzing the role of the United States in shaping the policy of the West on key questions of world politics, including Peter Gowan's study of the logic of 'Shock Therapy' in Eastern Europe in NLR 213 and Robert Wade's account in NLR 217 of how the US view prevailed when the World Bank produced its report *The East Asian Miracle*. In this issue James Petras and Steve Teux argue that the United States, in defending its leading role, repeatedly undermined attempts to secure a settlement in Bosnia negotiated by European or United Nations mediators. Only after August 1995 was Washington ready to preside over a peace agreement that sanctioned both Croatian and Serbian 'ethnic cleansing' and gave no more to the Bosnians than had been on offer earlier. In the meantime, many thousands had been killed. The essay by Dubravka Ugresic, a Croatian writer, powerfully evokes the impact that the break-up of Yugoslavia has had even on those who have been spared the worst nightmares; her poignant observations remind us that among the things that have been lost are ways of living together, and that in the new order any memory of them must be denied.

Prior to the election, the Israeli government had already launched an indiscriminate bombardment on Lebanon, tightened up its devastating economic blockade of the Palestinian enclaves and established pervasive controls over movements within and between these areas. This isolation of whole populations was supposedly undertaken in the name of combating terrorism. Drawing on the work of Edward Said and Meron Benvenisti, Norman Finkelstein shows that the terms of the Oslo peace accords legitimized an oppressive system of communal segregation which Israel's new government will be no less happy to enforce than the old.

In the debates on stakeholding, little attention has been paid to institutions which have working-class origins and are an imperfect but working example of stakeholding principles—building societies. Christopher Hird explains their history and how they give a better deal to their members than organizations which are subject to their shareholders. Despite such benefits, building societies are being rapidly transformed into banks in a process which dispossesses their members but greatly enriches their senior managers.

Peter Drucker provides a major survey of gay and lesbian movements in the Third World. While there were various and complex indigenous same-sex practices throughout what was to become the Third World—

of the Left and the principles of social solidarity and fraternity. Demagogues, first and foremost Milosevic, were able to tap into popular anger over the 'reform' measures and channel it for chauvinist purposes. The demonstrations of Serbians in 1987–88 which Milosevic directed against the autonomous status of Vojvodina and Kosovo had in the beginning a powerful anti-austerity charge. As one author remarked: 'The demonstrators were often paid by their employers to attend but increasingly came from among the unemployed, who needed a handout or had nothing else to do.'³² The young and the unemployed contributed significant numbers of soldiers to the warring sides as the fighting began.³³ The economic policies promoted by the West in Yugoslavia during the 1980s helped create the social and psychological preconditions for war along with a ready pool of embittered potential combatants.

The IMF did not simply guide economic reforms. It also tried to promote political and institutional reforms that it considered necessary for the long-term economic health of the economy. These proposals sharpened conflict between the political components of the old Yugoslavia, accelerating the trend to political break-up and war. The IMF argued that a full-fledged market economy required that a powerful central bank set monetary policy in a unified domestic market in which labour, credit and commodities circulated freely. The IMF further insisted that federal decision-making had to be strengthened at the expense of the old-style consensual policy-making among republican representatives. The 1990 World Bank-IMF loans cut off transfer payments from the centre to the republics and provinces.³⁴ The trend of IMF policy was to undermine the complex 'balancing act' of the Tito period which had attempted to lessen inequalities between republics and peoples by means of subsidies, federal aid, federal support for troubled industries and so forth. IMF opposition to these norms stimulated suspicions between the republics and contributed to growing tension in Yugoslavia.³⁵

The third fact obscured by the ethnic hatred thesis is that the internal conflicts and territorial break-ups were in large part fuelled and fomented by Western European and US politicians, intent on carving out spheres of influence in Central Europe. From the break-up of the Russian empire in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, Europe—but principally Germany—has been scrambling with the US to grab resources, lucrative firms, skilled scientists and market share. Early on West Germany annexed East Germany; the US quickly offered 'associate' NATO membership to the Czechs, Poles and Hungarians.

German Ambitions

The break-up of Yugoslavia falls into the same pattern of dissolving larger coherent units into smaller ones in which local satraps could be more easily converted into client regimes. In the beginning, the US 'played' the nationalist card as a way of undermining the communist

³² Woodward, *Balkans Tragedy*, pp. 92, 96; Misha Glenn, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, New York 1994, p. 34.

³³ Woodward, *Balkans Tragedy*, p. 249; Glenn, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 121.

³⁴ Chossudovsky, 'Dismantling Former Yugoslavia', p. 521.

³⁵ Woodward, *Balkans Tragedy*, pp. 39–40, 69–70, 74–81.

legacy in Yugoslavia. The idea of a unified, stable, non-communist state under US—rather than Russian—direction appealed to Washington. Not the least appealing feature of such an outcome was the existence of a central authority responsible for paying back outstanding international debts; any division of Yugoslavia, and corresponding reapportioning of the debt on a republican basis, would probably result in default by the poorer republics. There were two problems with this tack that swiftly undermined the thrust of Washington's policy: German regional ambitions and Serbian hegemonic aspirations.

Germany forced the EC to follow its lead in recognizing the 'independence' of Croatia and Slovenia—a policy that followed close German ties to the budding Croat and Slovenian politicians. Both countries for all intents and purposes were seen by Bonn as part of the New Germany's sphere of influence.³⁶ At the same time, the Serbs sought to establish their hegemonic rule by raising the issue of the fate of the minority Serbs within the new, ethnically diverse Croat state and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. This was an explosive issue in Croatia where hundreds of thousands of Serbs had been victims of genocide during World War II at the hands of the fascist Croatian Pavelic regime.³⁷ The Europeans recognized Croatia without providing any guarantees to the Serbs in Croatia. They thus handed Serbian chauvinists and extremists a powerful mobilizing issue.

As the de facto partitioning took place, the US sought to seize a 'remnant piece of the action' as leverage for any future settlement in the region by recognizing the independence of Macedonia and Bosnia. Yugoslavia was transformed into a region of warring ethnic entities occupying the same territory and dependent on external patrons. Each of the patrons sought the moral high ground, spot-lighting the victims of their particular ethnic clients. Since the US ostensibly chose the weakest of the competing ethnic entities, it seemed to have the least political leverage but the most 'moral capital' because the Bosnians were more vulnerable to attack than either the Croats or Serbs.

The war devastated all the 'minorities' residing in all the territories conquered by the 'majorities,' though without any doubt the Bosnian Muslims were hurt the worst.³⁸ The Bosnian Serb forces—often with the aid of the Yugoslav Army (JNA)—pillaged and looted villages, engaged in large numbers of rapes, set up camps in which many Croatian and Muslim leaders were tortured and executed, expelled the non-Serbian population from their areas, charging them for the privilege of fleeing and coercing others into forced labour. Ivana Nizich of Human Rights Watch described the Serbian actions in parts of Croatia and much of Bosnia as meeting

³⁶ The British government abandoned its publicly stated opposition to diplomatic recognition of Croatia and Slovenia under German pressure on 16 December 1991, in exchange for German support for the British right to 'opt-out' from European monetary union and the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty. See John Sweeney, 'How Bosnia Paid Price of Major's Maastricht Opt-Out Coup', *The Observer*, 17 September 1995.

³⁷ Vladimir Dedijer, *The Yugoslav Auschwitz and the Vatican*, Buffalo 1992.

³⁸ United Nations, *Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 Annex Summary and Conclusions*, 1994. Published in US Congress, *Commission of Cooperation and Security in Europe*, 104th Congress, First Session, 4 April 1995, pp. 87–9.

the criteria set forth in the Genocide Convention. The Tribunal has confirmed that, at least for parts of Bosnia, by charging Omarska camp commander Zeljko Mejakic with, among other violations of humanitarian law, the crime of genocide. Indeed, crimes perpetrated by the Bosnian Serb civilian and military authorities in north-western Bosnia were systematic, well-organized and pre-meditated and were aimed at exterminating, at least in part, members of the non-Serbian population.³⁹

The Serbian government was actively involved in arming, training, providing logistical and artillery support to the Bosnian Serb forces. A notorious example of these joint operations was the three-month siege of Vukovar in 1992 conducted by the Bosnian Serbs and the JNA, which resulted in the destruction of the city.⁴⁰ The shelling of Dubrovnik by the JNA, which began in October of 1991, also outraged world opinion.⁴¹ The brutal siege of Sarajevo, an act of little apparent military value, also proved a constant affront via video on television.⁴²

However, since the US has the best world-wide propaganda machine to publicize its client victims, it was able to elicit selective moral indignation focusing almost exclusively on the fate of the Muslims. The plight of the Muslims was a crucial component of the story but it was not the whole truth. The brutalization and slaughter of other peoples was forgotten; the crimes committed by armies and irregular forces other than the Serbs were ignored in the mass media. As Glenny put it, the war was perceived in the US as 'a straight case of aggression by one state, Serbia, against another, Bosnia-Herzegovina...'⁴³

Thus media accounts polarized the warring forces between the Serb aggressor and all other forces, a scenario which ignored the episodes of Serb and Croatian cooperation in the planned carve-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Milosevic and Tudjman met in March 1991 to discuss the division of Bosnia. In May 1992 Bosnian leaders, Boban on the Croatian side and Karadzic on the Serbian side, met in Graz with the blessings of Tudjman and Milosevic to discuss the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁴ The fact of these discussions and plans was incompatible with the US government version of events, which has exclusively blamed the Serbians. A full and honest report of these matters was impossible in the overly polarized and selective ideological campaign mounted by the US government and the mass media.

Selective Indignation

The election of Franjo Tudjman in Croatia in 1990 was marked by virulent anti-Serb campaigning, and disturbing echoes of anti-Semitism.

³⁹ Ivana Nizich, 'Crime and Punishment', *War Report*, May 1995, p. 27.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 28; Human Rights Watch, *Playing the Communal Card*, New York 1995, pp. 117-121; Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide*, Shaftesbury, Dorset 1993, pp. 90-101, 109-19.

⁴¹ Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered*, p. 152; Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, pp. 172-3.

⁴² Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, pp. 201-2; Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, pp. 185-6; Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia, 1992-1994*, New York 1995, pp. 185-7.

⁴³ Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 223; Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, p. 182.

⁴⁴ Samary, *Yugoslavia Dismembered*, pp. 95-6; Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, New York 1994, p. 231; Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, New York 1995, p. 200; Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p. 310.

Before the war broke out between Serbs and Croats, Serbs in Croatia were dismissed from their jobs in both the public and private sector, and were subject to bombings, eviction and other forms of intimidation. Innocent Serb civilians were killed by government forces in many towns and cities in Croatia, and tens of thousands of Serbs were driven from their homes in the cities by intimidation or violence.⁴⁵ In the spring of 1993 war broke out between the Muslims and the Croats in Bosnia. Although Croatian forces took control of Western Herzegovina, they faced the problem of a Muslim majority in Mostar, the main city of the region. Mostar was bombarded by Croatian artillery which destroyed much of the city including its landmark white stone bridge, and isolated the Muslim inhabitants from food and other supplies, a crime comparable to the Serb shelling of Dubrovnik.⁴⁶ Croatian soldiers murdered hundreds of Muslim civilians in Ahmići in April 1993 and also murdered civilians in Stupni Do in October 1993.⁴⁷ Ivana Nizich described Bosnian Croat detention camps as follows:

Muslims, and some Serbs, were arbitrarily arrested, interned and bestially mistreated in prisons or detention camps in the Mostar, Capljina and Stolac areas. In particular the abuses perpetrated in the Dretelj and Gabela camps in the Capljina area resembled those perpetrated by Bosnian Serb forces in the Omarska and Keraterm camps one year earlier. The government of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman armed and supported the Bosnian Croat forces during this time and, although Tudjman urged the Bosnian Croat authorities to refrain from such abuses, his government continued to support these forces without respite.⁴⁸

The episode of 'ethnic cleansing' involving the largest number of refugees in the history of the war was carried out by the Croatian military in a few days in 1995. Over 150,000 Serbs in the Krajina region of Croatia were put to flight as a result of Croatia's Operation Storm in August 1995.⁴⁹ The assault was organized with escape hatches to allow the populations under siege to flee.⁵⁰ Serbs have been prevented from returning by a variety of bureaucratic ruses; in addition, many of their homes have been plundered and burned and some of those who stayed behind have been brutally treated or even murdered.⁵¹

Military forces loyal to the Bosnian government have also committed crimes and excesses, though not on the scale of the Serbian and Croatian forces. In an offensive launched against the Serbs from Srebrenica in late 1992 and 1993 the Bosnian government forces 'moved swiftly through the Serbian villages, slaughtering a large number of civilians on the way. Because the atrocities were being perpetrated by the Muslims, they

⁴⁵ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p. 133; Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, pp. 77, 121, 123.

⁴⁶ Robert Donia and John Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*, New York 1994, pp. 251–3; Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, p. 201, Nizich, 'Crime and Punishment', p. 28.

⁴⁷ Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 256; Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 230, Nizich, 'Crime and Punishment', p. 28.

⁴⁸ Nizich, 'Crime and Punishment', p. 28.

⁴⁹ David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, New York 1995, pp. 329, 353.

⁵⁰ Zarko Puhovski, 'Cleansing "Krajina"', *War Report*, October 1995.

⁵¹ Milorad Pupovac, 'A Minority Dispersed and Unprotected', *War Report*, October 1995, pp. 14–15.

received relatively little attention in the world media.⁵² Further crimes were perpetrated by the Bosnian government forces in the war with the Croats which began in the spring of 1993. Atrocities were committed by the Muslims in the fighting in the Travnik and Vitez areas in May and June 1993.⁵³ According to Nizich: 'Bosnian government forces and Muslim paramilitary groups have summarily executed Serbian and Croatian civilians and prisoners of war. Serbian prisoners have been brutalized in the Celebici and Tarcin prisons by forces loyal to the Bosnian Government.'⁵⁴ The use of Iranian and Afghan fundamentalists to fight for the client Bosnian regime was a well-kept war secret even when it involved their use in 'terrorist, illegal and shock troop activities.'⁵⁵

In this slaughterhouse the only moral issue for the media was Serbian atrocities against the Bosnian Muslims. No one would know from the nightly news or from the daily newspapers that Croatia ran brutal detention camps or that it planned and carried out the largest single episode of ethnic cleansing in the war. Such facts were inconvenient for the US government's justification of its own policy and therefore ignored. Once again the mass media convinced the bulk of liberal and progressive opinion-makers that US intervention was needed for a high moral purpose.

Propaganda and the Intellectuals

For the most part, US intellectuals, including progressives who so pride themselves on their media sophistication and ability to decode the ruses of power, fell for a propaganda campaign so crude that on occasion Serbian detainees in camps or dead Serbian children were simply identified as Muslims. Editors passed over stories about Serbs in Muslim-Croat camps. The razing of 100 of the 156 orthodox churches in Croatia alleged by the patriarchate in Belgrade was ignored. Reports of the rape of Serbian women went uninvestigated by the media.⁵⁶ All of this culminated in the media indifference to the ethnic cleansing in the Krajina in 1995. The facts of this episode were reported but its human dimension of suffering and dislocation—conveyed in such forceful detail, and rightly so, when the victims were Muslim or citizens of Sarajevo—was missing.⁵⁷ As Peter Brock put it in *Foreign Policy*: 'The almost uniform manner in which the international news media, including the American media, dismissed Serb claims has played a critical role in the unfolding tragedy in the former Yugoslavia.'⁵⁸

What made this issue even more 'delicate' from the perspective of US hegemonic aspirations in Europe was the fact that, after the disintegration of Bush's New World Order, there was solid and enduring public and Congressional opposition to US military intervention in Bosnia. No matter how much the mass media turned up the atrocity-laden decibels,

⁵² Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 221.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 231.

⁵⁴ Nizich, 'Crime and Punishment', p. 28.

⁵⁵ O'Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia*, pp. 93–4; Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, pp. 356–7.

⁵⁶ Peter Brock, 'Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press', *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1993–94.

⁵⁷ For an exception, see Robert Fisk, 'Croats Burn and Kill with a Vengeance', *The Independent*, 4 September 1995.

⁵⁸ Brock, 'Dateline Yugoslavia', p. 152.

no matter how much Muslim refugees dominated the war photos, the US public refused to be drawn in.⁵⁹ Clinton and the Washington elite had to sit on the sidelines while the Western Europeans attempted to impose a settlement guaranteeing German interests and establishing the French idea of an independent European security system. But, as we shall soon see, the US may not have been directly active in seeking a settlement but it certainly played a major role in undermining European efforts.

In summary, what began as an effort to undermine communism in Yugoslavia by fomenting nationalist mini-states led to rival nationalists battling over regions in which rival ethnic claims became surrogates for wider international power struggles. The turn from Karl Marx to Adam Smith led to a Hobbesian world where, in the name of abstract 'nations', national disintegration became the disorder of the day. That is the larger meaning of the West's destruction of Tito's multi-ethnic nation-state.

European Independence: The Bosnian Test

Having played a major role in bringing about the war, the West Europeans under the leadership of the French and the British sought to impose a settlement that took account of the existing territorial fragments that were the result of the ethnic wars. But for the French, in particular, this was a testing ground for European independence. The major part of the peace effort was organized and directed by those Europeans whose troops provided the 'peace-makers.' Much more was at stake than either the re-establishment of peace or new spheres of influence in Central Europe. The strategic issue was whether the European powers were capable of establishing their own 'security system'. The success or failure of European projection of power in Bosnia had implications far beyond the immediate conflict. From the beginning, the US understood what was at stake in a successful European-based military operation: the loss of leverage and the enhancement of European strategic decision-making.

European peace initiatives in the former Yugoslavia began with the Lisbon initiative which emerged from a conference in February 1992 at which Izetbegovic, Boban for the Croats and Karadzic for the Serbs all agreed to a partition plan. The plan would have divided Bosnia into three regions dominated by separate ethnic groups which would share power in a confederation. This effort was led by a special commission of the European Community.⁶⁰ During the two-month course of the negotiations, the US-supported option of recognizing Bosnia-Herzegovina emerged as an alternative to the Lisbon Agreement. Immediately after Izetbegovic signed the accord, he met with the American ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmerman, in Sarajevo. The Muslim leader complained about the agreement. Zimmerman commented: 'He said he didn't like it. I told him, if he didn't like, it why sign it?' Promptly thereafter, Izetbegovic renounced the Lisbon agreement. David Binder of the *New York Times* described the denouement: 'Finally, the United

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Lenard Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, Boulder, Co 1995, p 243, David Binder, 'US Policy-makers on Bosnia Admit Errors in Opposing Partition in 1992', *New York Times*, 29 August 1993, p 10

States prevailed, by April 1992 the Europeans joined Washington in granting diplomatic recognition to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The partition talks collapsed.⁶¹ In a 1993 interview, Zimmerman remarked—tens of thousands of deaths later—that ‘the Lisbon Agreement wasn’t bad at all.’⁶² Zimmerman later claimed his remarks had been misinterpreted; subsequent US disruption of European peace initiatives has been far more discreet.⁶³

Early in 1993 the Europeans formulated the Vance-Owen Plan (VOPP) through the institutional mechanism of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY). The Steering Committee of the ICFY was chaired by David Owen, representing the European Community, and Cyrus Vance, and later Thorvald Stoltenberg, representing the UN Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Hence the driving force behind the VOPP, and later the Owen-Stoltenberg plan, was the European Community.⁶⁴ This plan was composed of a set of guidelines for future political and institutional arrangements, steps to achieve the end of hostilities and demilitarization, and a map setting forth the proposed division of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The VOPP recommended the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ten provinces, with the Croats, Muslims and Serbs each to have a majority in three provinces. Sarajevo was to be the seat of government and an open city. The provinces were endowed with most governmental powers, excluding international responsibilities such as negotiations with foreign states. Each of the provinces and the central government was to have its own legislature, chief executive and judiciary. The weak central government of Bosnia-Herzegovina was to be led by a nine-member presidency.

This was a somewhat attenuated ethnic partition. The nine provinces were based on ethnic majorities, three allocated to each group. On the other hand, the provinces with ethnic majorities in common were not permitted a common administration or the right to negotiate deals with Croatia or Serbia, nor were they contiguous. Corridors between the provinces were to be controlled by international forces. And the nine provinces were conceived of as component parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶⁵ Serbs were to be given a clear majority in provinces making up 43 per cent of the territory. At the time of the plan, the Serbs controlled 70 per cent of the territory. The plan thus demanded a very substantial withdrawal by the Serbs.⁶⁶ In addition, refugees were to be allowed to return to their homes.⁶⁷

The Vance-Owen Plan had the virtue of recognizing the de facto ethnic territorial divisions and more or less divided Bosnia according to rival ethnic populations. It was realistic because after all the ethnic killing fomented by the European and US power-grab, it was impossible to

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, p. 268

⁶⁴ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 1–2.

⁶⁵ O’Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia*, pp. 136–7, Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, pp. 214–15, Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 89–91.

⁶⁶ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 91.

⁶⁷ Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, pp. 247–8

imagine a return to the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society that had existed for fifty years under Tito's communist regime.

The Undermining of the Vance-Owen Plan

The Croats promptly accepted all elements of the plan. Karadzic declared for the Bosnian Serbs that the plan was acceptable as a basis for starting negotiations and agreed to the cessation of hostilities, though Vance and Owen believed that the Bosnian Serbs would not readily negotiate away their plans for a separate Bosnian Serb state. Izetbegovic accepted the proposed political arrangements and the military proposals but rejected the map in a fashion that David Owen described as a 'totally non-negotiable position' which, if maintained, would doom the peace plan. By mid-January the VOPP had six of the nine required signatures, and the support of the EC and the Russian Federation.⁶⁸ The VOPP had rather quickly made substantial progress although international support for the plan would be required to secure the agreement.

Almost at once, the Clinton administration began to undermine the prospects of the plan. In January the administration responded by praising the 'peace process' in general but not this particular plan, while at the same time raising the possibility of other options that would encourage the intransigence of the Muslims: tighter sanctions and the lifting of the arms embargo.⁶⁹ By early February the administration had openly rejected the VOPP, claiming that it was impossible to enforce and would in any case require ground troops if enforcement were attempted. Most significantly, the US repeated the principal earlier Muslim objection to the accord noted by Owen: that the map was unacceptable.⁷⁰ The map ratified the gains made by the Serbs through ethnic cleansing, according to the US.⁷¹

Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* noted that: "The Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats have signalled their willingness to accept the plan. Bosnia's Muslims, led by President Alija Izetbegovic, are resisting it because they believe that Washington will soon offer a better deal."⁷² *Le Monde* also reported that the Croats had accepted the plan; the Bosnian Serbs had accepted 80 per cent of the assignments of land made by the map while the Muslims continued to balk at the map.⁷³ David Owen remarked: 'We can't get the Muslims on board. That is largely the fault of the Americans, because the Muslims won't budge while they think Washington may come into it on their side any day now.'⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 91-2.

⁶⁹ Elaine Sciolino, 'Christopher Leery of Bosnia Accord', *New York Times*, 22 January 1993, pp. A-1, A-7.

⁷⁰ Elaine Sciolino, 'US Declines to Back Peace Plan as the Balkan Talks Shift to UN', *New York Times*, 2 February 1993, p. A-9.

⁷¹ Afiane Bassir Pour and Alain Frachon, 'Le Nouveau gouvernement américain demande temps pour arrêter sa position', *Le Monde*, 3 February 1993, p. 3.

⁷² Thomas Friedman, 'US Will Not Push Bosnia to Accept Bosnia Peace Plan', *New York Times*, 4 February 1993, A-1, A-11.

⁷³ Bassir Pour and Frachon, 'Le Nouveau gouvernement', p. 5.

⁷⁴ R.W. Apple, 'Mediator is Upset at US Reluctance over Bosnia Talks', *New York Times*, 3 February 1993, A-1, A-3.

Why would the Muslims not believe a better deal was in the offing? Washington was repeating their main objection to the VOPP, objecting to Serbian positions and raising policy options that would enhance the Muslim position.⁷⁵ Positions such as these and talk about lifting the arms embargo undermined the negotiations and provoked a crisis. As David Owen remarked, the crisis was 'above all, for the twelve member states of the European Community for the VOPP had been supported by them at every stage over the nearly five months of negotiations. European ministers had not been bystanders but intimately involved and consulted on the detail.'⁷⁶

Of course the publicly stated US declarations of opposition to the VOPP helped doom the plan. But beyond this, Clinton's policy contained two elements which encouraged the intransigence of the Bosnian Serbs and President Izetbegovic: the administration's refusal to impose a strategy and its lift-and-strike strategy. The administration early insisted that it would not impose a solution, or support any imposition, on the parties involved. Christopher made it clear, in particular, that he would not impose the VOPP on the Muslims.⁷⁷ This refusal encouraged the Bosnian Serbs in their unwillingness to take the VOPP seriously. The Muslim side was encouraged to hold out for a better deal by the administration's lift-and-strike strategy which recommended lifting the arms embargo and answering any Bosnian Serb ground offensive with air strikes.⁷⁸ As Owen put it: 'Could we really expect the Bosnian Muslims to start a meaningful negotiation from scratch in the midst of lift and strike which would give them the hope of outright victory?'⁷⁹ It is difficult to see these positions of the Clinton administration as anything but cynical ploys intended to disrupt the negotiating process by encouraging the Muslims to ratchet up their demands while signalling to the Bosnian Serbs that a final settlement would be reached by force of arms not negotiations.

The consequences of US policies were obvious in the fate of the VOPP. At an emergency conference in Athens called by the Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis in early May, Milosevic got the Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic to sign the VOPP. The Bosnian Serb Assembly rejected the plan and called for a referendum. The plan was rejected by 96 per cent of the voters.⁸⁰ The Muslim leadership finally accepted the plan under considerable pressure. Its acceptance of the plan was highly conditional and the government declared the conditions violated in a few days.⁸¹

The Owen-Stoltenberg Plan emerged on the ruins of the VOPP in the summer of 1993. It envisioned the division of Bosnia into ethnic states, with the Bosnian state having little power. Mostar and Sarajevo were to

⁷⁵ *Le Monde*, 2 February 1993, p. 1; Alain Debove, 'M.M. Vance et Owen comptent sur le Conseil de sécurité pour imposer leur plan de paix', *Le Monde*, 2 February 1993, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 100–102.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117; O'Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia*, p. 145.

⁷⁸ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 159.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁸⁰ O'Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia*, p. 164; Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 262.

⁸¹ Bassir Pour, 'Le président bosniaque a signé le plan de paix pour la Bosnie-Herzégovine', *Le Monde*, 27 March 1993, p. 3; Julia Preston, 'Bosnia Plan Signed By All But Serbs', *Washington Post*, 26 March 1993, pp. A-1, A-29; Snezana Trifunovska, ed., *Yugoslavia Through Documents: From Its Creation to its Dissolution*, Dordrecht 1994, pp. 870, 871–2.

be administered by the BC and the UN respectively for a time. The Bosnian Serbs were to receive a little over 52 per cent of the territory; the Muslims 30 per cent and the Croats a little over 17 per cent.⁸² The Bosnian Serb Assembly voted for the deal. The Bosnian Croat Parliament also accepted it overwhelmingly.

The US adopted the same position on Owen-Stoltenberg that it had on the VOPP. It declared its support for peace generally while refusing to endorse the particular plan on the table. In the first public statement on the plan, US representative at the UN Madeleine Albright declared that the US was 'studying the plan' but did not plan to approve it before the other parties had done so.⁸³ At the same time, the US refused to give Izetbegovic a guarantee of US participation in any UN force that would enforce the Owen-Stoltenberg plan. Clinton insisted on the fulfilment of numerous conditions before US troops could be involved, notably including clear NATO—not UN—control over any peacekeeping force, a condition that the UN had to this point been reluctant to concede.⁸⁴ Izetbegovic publicly turned against the proposal and the Muslim parliament voted for accepting it as long as all conquered territory was returned—a stance which amounted to rejection.⁸⁵ European governments, especially France and the UK, interpreted the US actions as encouragement for the Bosnians to continue fighting in hopes of obtaining US aid. US policy was widely resented in the European Community because it was thought to doom the peace effort to failure.⁸⁶

The Contact Group

A final peace initiative that the US sabotaged during this period was the Contact Group negotiations arranged by the US, Russia, France, Britain and Germany. Under this plan, a Muslim-Croat federation would receive 51 per cent of Bosnian territory and the Serbs 49 per cent. The Croats and Muslims agreed to the plan. The Bosnian Serbs rejected it. Milosevic came to support it, in search of a lifting of the embargo on Serbia. He denounced the Bosnian Serbs sharply for their position and endorsed the Contact Group proposals publicly and in plain language: the Bosnian Serb leadership was told they could no longer stay in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. More importantly, he agreed to the stationing of international observers on the border between Serbia and Bosnia to monitor an announced blockade of the Bosnian Serbs.⁸⁷ Further evidence of progress in efforts to reach a negotiated settlement was the attempt to trade recognition of Croatia by Serbia and Montenegro 'in return for Zagreb's willingness to grant the Krajina substantial political self-government and cultural autonomy.'⁸⁸

⁸² Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 212, *Le Monde*, 22 August 1993, p. 3

⁸³ Alain Frachon, 'Malaise au département d'Etat', *Le Monde*, 25 August 1993, p. 3

⁸⁴ Alain Frachon, 'Les Etats-Unis paraissent peu pressés de venir en aide aux Musulmans', *Le Monde*, 10 September 1993, p. 4, Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 220.

⁸⁵ Chuck Sudetic, 'Bosnian Parliament Votes 65 to 0 to Reject the UN Peace Proposal', *New York Times*, 29 August 1993, p. 10, Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, p. 295, Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, p. 220

⁸⁶ F. Stephen Larabee, 'La politique américaine et la crise yougoslave', *Politique Etrangère*, vol. 59, no. 4, Winter 1994–95, p. 1045.

⁸⁷ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 296–7

⁸⁸ Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, pp. 310–18

The forward motion of the Contact Group in its efforts to isolate the Bosnian Serbs was broken by the Bosnian Muslims and the United States. Against the backdrop of ethnic intolerance in Croatia and a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing by the Bosnian Serbs, the Muslims launched an offensive against the Bosnian Serbs on three fronts in the autumn of 1994: in the Bihac region, central Bosnia and south of Sarajevo.⁸⁹ This offensive received the vociferous support of the US as the 'legitimate use of the right of defence' by the 'principal victims of Serbian aggression.'⁹⁰ In addition, on 3 November the US led the General Assembly of the United Nations to urge the Security Council to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia. Member states were urged to give 'cooperation' to the Bosnian Muslims in the exercise of their 'natural right of legitimate defence.' The US ambassador to the United Nations denounced the work of the Contact Group as 'insufficient' and applying 'diplomatic pressure which was neither coherent nor constant.'⁹¹ The US announced further that as of 15 November it would no longer participate in efforts to stop arms shipments headed for Croatia or Bosnia.⁹² These actions by the US and the Muslims helped to bury the work of the Contact Group.⁹³ However, the de facto relaxation of the arms embargo was to help Croatia far more than the Muslim-led government in Sarajevo; the Croatian authorities controlling access to Bosnia prevented heavy weapons from getting through.

A pattern emerges from US behaviour in these four episodes. European initiatives stimulated the US administration to issue pro-peace rhetoric of a very general kind and sometimes even to participate diffidently in the initiative. Soon, however, the bland rhetoric gave way to a diplomatically disabling scepticism or even outright rejection of any concrete European proposals. Such public declarations were coupled with policies which shook the faith of the negotiating parties in the future of the proposal in question or encouraged their intransigence. Such policies have included refusal to commit troops for peacekeeping, advocacy of the lift-and-strike strategy, withdrawal from embargo enforcement, and political campaigns in the UN. While European diplomacy and UN peacekeeping were thus discredited, US security forces were quietly pursuing a separate task, giving military advice and technical support to the Croatian armed forces to help them eject the Serbs from Krajina and western Bosnia.

US policy led the Bosnian Muslims to believe that by resisting the European policy they would get US support to improve their position. They never got more than indirect support via Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and other fundamentalist Islamic states. It was enough to keep the war going but not enough to win, which suited Washington fine; more dead Bosnians meant more favourable propaganda for Washington, more moral discredit for Europe, and more demand for US intervention. The European policy had relied on sanctions to get the Serbs to the conference

⁸⁹ Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, pp. 304–5; Jean-Baptiste Naudet, 'Le sort des armes se retourne à Bihac', *Le Monde*, November 3 1994, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Afiane Bassir Pour 'Les Etats-Unis ne peuvent plus espérer faire adopter leur résolution sur les livraisons d'armes à la Bosnie', *Le Monde*, 5 November 1994, p. 3.

⁹² Philippe Lemaitre, 'Les Européens font bloc pour critiquer la décision américaine à propos de l'embargo sur les armes', *Le Monde*, 16 November 1994, p. 8.

⁹³ Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, p. 319.

table and envisaged the use of UN peacekeeping forces to help implement any agreement made. With leadership passing to the US and NATO, the policy of peacekeeping was replaced by that of answering Bosnian Serb provocations with massive air-strikes. Supposedly these strikes would reveal the feebleness of a 'sanctions only' policy and would enable a much better deal to be struck. The run-up to Dayton was marked by heavy aerial bombardments which further helped to prepare the way for Croat-Muslim sweeps clearing Serbs from western Bosnia.

The Dayton Agreement: US 'Leadership' in Action

One can only understand Bosnian rejection of the Owen plan of partition and the subsequent acceptance of the US-brokered Dayton de facto partition—after tens of thousands of deaths—by the relation of Bosnian Muslims to the US. The Dayton Agreement is partition; except for Sarajevo, the Muslims got little else in terms of real control over Croat or Serbian populations and regions. The Dayton Agreement revealed how seriously the US took its own moral pronouncements on the Balkan War. The cornerstone of the agreement was most probably a private trade worked out between Tudjman and Milosevic. The Croats received Eastern Slavonia while in return the Bosnian Serbs maintained control of the Posavina Corridor, with Brcko subject to arbitration. The Corridor connected the eastern and western parts of the Serb-occupied areas, allowing them to be united into the Republika Srpska. The Serbs ended up with 49 per cent of the territory of Bosnia. The Bosnian Muslims were joined with the Croats in a Muslim-Croat Federation.⁹⁴ To these essentials were added a weak Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, endowed with formal responsibility for foreign policy, foreign trade, monetary policy, transportation and immigration. But the two constituent entities, the Serb Republic and the Muslim-Croat Federation would each control their own armies. Milosevic negotiated for the Bosnian Serbs after the US excluded two key Bosnian Serb leaders, Karadzic and Mladic, because of their indictments for war crimes; the Muslim delegation excluded representatives of the regions to be traded away, refugees and the military.⁹⁵

After the long period of US-inspired intransigence by the Bosnian Muslims, they ended up with a deal backed by the US and arranged by Tudjman and Milosevic, this time in Dayton rather than a hunting lodge in the Balkans. The Serbs got more territory under the deal than they would have gotten under Vance-Owen. The Bosnian Serb territories were now connected by a land bridge, which they were not under Vance-Owen. The Bosnian Serbs were given a united political entity under the Dayton agreement, unlike under the VOPP. The Muslims were now yoked together with Croats in a federation whose centre of gravity would most likely be Zagreb.⁹⁶ Such was the achievement of American diplomacy, an agreement that ratified ethnic cleansing on a scale never envisioned in Vance-Owen. This, together with the blood spilled in the interim between the VOPP and the Dayton Agreement,

⁹⁴ Anthony Borden and Drago Hedl, 'How the Bosnians Were Broken', *War Reports*, no. 39, February-March 1996, pp. 31-9.

⁹⁵ Roy Gutman, 'Signed, Sealed, Undelivered', *War Reports*, November-December 1995, pp. 5-9; US Congress, *The Peace Process*, p. 51.

⁹⁶ Borden and Hedl, 'How the Bosnians Were Broken', pp. 31-9.

was the price of US leadership. The Europeans were shut out of the negotiating process entirely in Dayton. One European diplomat stated: 'The Europeans were there because it was important to have the outcome endorsed by the Contact Group governments. I don't suffer any illusions as to whether the Americans actually wanted any active European participation. They were not even willing to let us discuss or advise behind the scenes.'⁹⁷

After Washington in effect told the Muslims that this is what they could get and, if they did not accept it, there would be no further support, the Muslims signed up. During the period when the Dayton negotiations were being planned, Izetbegovic requested permission to continue the fighting. The US negotiator reportedly told him: 'You are playing craps with your country's future.'⁹⁸

What was crucial in this chain of events was the replacement of the European-led security arrangement, coordinated under UN auspices, by the US-NATO Command. As soon as NATO replaced the independent European initiatives and France accepted US command, the high morality and maximalist demands of the US-Bosnian axis disappeared. 'Pragmatism' replaced idealism.

Once European leadership in the region had been broken, the Muslims were given short shrift. The fundamentalists, who were useful in maintaining the client Muslim regime, were unceremoniously told to leave as they might provoke US military casualties. The Serb minority, which heretofore had been stigmatized as war criminals, was suddenly recognized to have some legitimate fears, while the prospect of forcing all Bosnian Serbs to live under the Bosnian Muslim regime receded. Washington began to bring its Bosnian Muslim clients under control. An integral Bosnia was no longer the centrepiece of US policy. NATO and the re-establishment of US global leadership was the principal victory in the Dayton agreements. The corollary was the abject failure of the Europeans' effort at an independent security system. The next crucial question was how successful Washington would be in projecting power in Europe and resisting domestic opposition.

The Return of NATO

The Dayton Agreements reconfirmed the division of Bosnia according to an ethnic distribution of power, but not until after more years of slaughter. The US returned to centre stage via the reassertion of NATO supremacy, in command of a 60,000 strong occupying force made up mainly of NATO forces. The EU, along with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, was relegated to a subordinate role of leading economic reconstruction efforts.⁹⁹

The inability of the European powers to impose a settlement demonstrated their dependence on US and NATO: without the US, the war would

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 34

⁹⁸ Gutman, 'Signed, Sealed, Undelivered', p. 5.

⁹⁹ US Senate, *The Peace Process*, p. 28.

continue: peace was only possible under US hegemony. Through its Bosnian assets, Washington could once again trumpet its claim to 'world leadership.' As the *New York Times* editorialized: 'Drawing appropriate conclusions from Europe's diplomatic and military failure in Bosnia, France now seems to be easing away from its old Gaullist dream of a purely European defence system excluding the United States.'¹⁰⁰

A bi-partisan committee of Republican and Democratic political leaders in an open letter to Congress, published in the *New York Times*, urged Congressional support for the sending of US troops to Bosnia, arguing its importance for NATO and 'American leadership': 'NATO remains the primary mechanism for protection of American security and influence in Europe...Should Congress repudiate an agreement which American leadership made possible it would jeopardize not only US leadership in NATO but the future of the Alliance itself.' Regarding 'American Leadership,' the Open Letter argues: 'Successful implementation [of the Dayton Agreements] would enhance the credibility of American commitments and the effectiveness of American leadership. Failure to implement would undermine our ability to persuade others to join with us in dealing with future crises and conflicts.'¹⁰¹

Conclusion

The reassertion of US influence in Europe via Bosnia is precarious because a substantial majority of US citizens are fed up with sacrificing domestic priorities in the name of global leadership. Congress is itself deeply divided, particularly as it pushes through a harsh austerity budget. These domestic constraints and public resistance to Washington's effort to reassert hegemony in Europe will become activated if the peace process unwinds and casualties occur. US military prowess and diplomatic success may well be ephemeral. And the assertion of US leadership in crisis situations will not deter German efforts to achieve economic dominance in Europe via the Maastricht Agreement nor the growing economic integration of the European Union.

While the US secures French acquiescence to NATO supremacy, and the Germans pressure the French to lower their deficits to meet Maastricht goals, French workers and trade unions have challenged the budgetary priorities and social policies of the Juppé regime. The deepening of popular opposition could undermine US leadership in France and on the continent. While Washington, with their Bosnian clients, were successful in ending European efforts to establish an independent security system, it is not clear that the NATO can re-establish Washington's influence in Europe.

Moreover, it is also unclear whether even in Bosnia the new NATO command can secure the current divisions and consolidate the mini-states as viable peaceful entities co-existing in contiguous territories. The unrepresentative nature of the negotiating parties in Dayton, excluding Bosnian Serb leaders as well as various communities on the Muslim side,

¹⁰⁰ *New York Times*, 7 December 1995, p. A-30

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. A-21.

is likely to be a continuing source of instability. It is likely that military flare-ups may occur, calling into question the agreements.

For many progressive intellectuals, the US propaganda campaign around the Balkan war broke down the long taboo, stretching back to the Vietnam anti-war movement, against supporting US military intervention abroad. The painfully acquired common sense of left-wing anti-imperialist politics was tossed aside, sometimes with a wonderful sense of moral theatrics and self-aggrandizement.¹⁰² A spasm of media propaganda was taken at face value. The imperial motives behind the self-righteous rhetoric of the US government were forgotten. The risk that small military expeditions, once begun, may imply very large commitments later on in defence of imperial 'credibility' was calmly accepted. Most importantly, the Western role, led by the US-dominated World Bank and IMF, in the genesis of the war and the US role in maintaining the slaughter was ignored. The international powers, dominated by the US, which had done so much to destroy Yugoslavia were now expected to put it back together. But the same destructive economic and political drive to subordinate the Balkan peoples to global capitalism and US-led NATO security arrangements could be expected to distort and pervert the work of 'reconstruction' and 'peace-making,' as it is now doing. Bosnia is now under the control of a non-Bosnian, non-elected administrator appointed by the US and the Europeans. The head of the Central Bank is a non-Bosnian appointed by the IMF.¹⁰³

The selective moral indignation that Washington and the mass media were able to wring out of Western intellectuals, progressives and conservatives, has run its course. With the new alignments in which Washington will seek to secure influence with the Croats and Serbs, the 'moral axes' will shift to become more 'even-handed.' Bosnia was a beachhead to project US influence in the Balkans, a literal minefield of shifting ethnic alliances and conflicts. In any case, Washington will no longer hold out for a unified Bosnian state now that it seems to have secured the pre-eminence of NATO. Having eased their Bosnian clients into partition, the policy now is to ensure that the Bosnians respect the new boundaries and the new authorities. Bosnia will obviously not re-establish the NATO of the Cold War period. It is foolish to think that NATO has discovered a new purpose or will establish a new basis for US hegemony. Just as the Gulf War and Somalia were inaugurated with great pronouncements but ended without glory, Bosnia will enter the history books as one more failed effort by the US to reassert its claims to world leadership. Too bad that the lives of so many Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs were spent making this footnote of post-Cold War history.

¹⁰² Susan Sontag, 'A Lament for Bosnia', *The Nation*, vol. 261, 25 December 1995.

¹⁰³ Chossudovsky, 'Dismantling Former Yugoslavia', p. 524.

The Confiscation of Memory

Shto by stalo vse ponjatno
Nado nachat' zhit' obratno¹

1.

I knew them because I was friendly with their son when I was a student. Stanko and Vera lived in a small two-roomed flat in the centre of Zagreb. Stanko was a retired officer of the Yugoslav People's Army, Vera a housewife. They had come to Zagreb from Bosnia. Their flat was like a little museum of Yugoslav everyday life. On the walls hung pictures of plump beauties lazing on the shores of romantic lakes densely populated by moorhens and swans. On top of the television was a Venetian gondola, on the fridge wooden herons—the most popular yugo-souvenir usually sold by Gypsies 'from Triglav to Djevdjelija'. A picture of Tito hung on the wall beside family photographs. The gleaming polish of the heavy walnut furniture (the first post-war Yugoslav-made bedroom fittings) was protected by little hand-embroidered throws. Boxes decorated with shells and other seaside mementoes with inscriptions ('A souvenir from Makarska', 'A souvenir from Cres') made a kind of diary of their summer

holidays. Those were years when everyone 'went to the sea' every summer on holidays organized by the trade unions.

On the shelves in peaceful coexistence resided various kinds of books: the ones my friend read (Schopenhauer, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard), Stanko's (books about Tito, monographs on Yugoslavia and the National Liberation War) and Vera's (cheap, paperback romances).

The flat was full not only of things but also of people, just like a station waiting-room. Through the flat came the neighbours' noisy children; they would come for a drink of water or a piece of bread spread with Vera's home-made jam. Every day Vera's friends would come, for 'a coffee' and 'a gossip'. Our friends would come as well, some of them would stop to play a game of chess and drink a glass of home-made Bosnian plum brandy with Stanko.

Vera kept preserves for the winter under the massive walnut double bed. There were tidy rows of jars of jam, gherkins, paprika, pickle and sacks of potatoes and onions. Once Vera called me into the bedroom, dragged a plastic box of soil out from under the bed and proudly showed me her sprouting tomato seedlings. Every day Vera baked Bosnian pies and fed her neighbours, friends, the neighbours' children, everyone who called in. And many people did call, drawn by the life (and the beguiling cultural syncretism!) which bubbled cheerfully in the little flat like water in a kettle.

And then the children (Stanko and Vera had a daughter as well as their son) finished their studies and left home. Concerned for their parents, the children found them another, larger, more comfortable flat. When I went to see them, Vera burst into tears accusing the children of taking away her things, her souvenirs, her furniture, they had taken everything, she had only been able to save one thing. And Vera took me into the modern bedroom and dragged a picture out from under the bed of plump beauties lazing on the shores of a romantic lake densely populated by moorhens and swans. 'I keep it under the bed. The children won't let me hang it on the wall...' she said in the hurt tone of a child.

Vera still baked Bosnian pies, only no one came any more. Stanko invited people every day for a game of chess and a Bosnian brandy, but somehow it wasn't on people's way anywhere, or they didn't feel like playing chess. Yes, the flat was certainly larger and better, but life had definitively changed its taste. In the name of a brighter future, Stanko and Vera's belongings, the guarantee of their emotional memory, had been 'confiscated'. The two old people found themselves, like fish out of water, deprived of their natural surroundings. People are not fish, so Stanko and Vera did not expire, but they had somehow abruptly aged, or at least that's how it seemed to me when I visited them.

2.

As I travelled, I knew that I would end up among people who at some stage would start talking enthusiastically about things I would not

¹ These lines by the Russian avant-garde poet Aleksandar Vvedenskij contain the message that for everything to become comprehensible one should start living backwards.

understand. So it was that I once found myself in the company of some Americans who were talking about children's books, their shared cultural inheritance. 'My favourite book was *Winnie the Pooh* . . .', I said, not quite truthfully (it wasn't until much later, when I was already an adult, that Pooh had become my favourite literary character). My acquaintances looked at me in surprise. No one ever talked about Milne. Although I had been in America many times, I suddenly found myself on unfamiliar territory. For a moment, I was a complete stranger, a being from another planet. And now, what a nuisance, this stranger would have to be told something that we never usually have to explain.

Some time ago, I happened to be in the company of some Dutch friends. After a pleasant conversation about this and that, we were overjoyed to find that we always watched the annual Eurovision song contest. The thought of the silly television spectacle aroused a childish gaiety in these grown-up people. And suddenly the atmosphere became warmer and more relaxed. For a moment we were a family, a European family.

As I travelled, I discovered that my American, Dutch, English friends and I easily talk about all kinds of things—about books and exhibitions, about films and culture, about politics and everyday life—but in the end there is always a bit of space that cannot be shared, a bit of life that cannot be translated, an experience which marked the shared life in a particular country, in a particular culture, in a particular system, at a particular historical moment. This unshareable layer in us is activated by a Pavlovian bell. And we salivate unfailingly, without really knowing why. That unknown space in us is something like a shared 'childhood', the warm territory of communality of a group of people, a space reserved for future nostalgia. Particularly if it should happen that this space is violently taken from us.

3.

There is an old joke about the Scots who, when they get together, shout out numbers and laugh at the numbers instead of telling the jokes. Why waste unnecessary words?

I believe that I can cross cultural borders easily, but nevertheless I observe that while I may communicate with 'Westerners' with greater interest, I definitely communicate with 'Easterners' with greater ease. It somehow turns out that we know each other even when we don't, that we pick up nuances more easily, that we know we are lying even when we seem to be telling the truth. We don't use footnotes in our conversation, they are unnecessary, it's enough to mention 'The Golden Calf' and our mouths already stretch into a smile.

An encounter with an 'Easterner' is often an encounter with our own, already forgotten past. I have met Russians who enthusiastically mentioned the name of Radmila Karaklajić² and Djordje Marjanović³ or

² A Yugoslav pop-star who was more popular in the Soviet Union than she was in Yugoslavia

³ A completely forgotten Yugoslav 'musical cretin', somewhat like the Czech Karel Got

proudly displayed their Yugoslav-made shoes bought in the Moscow 'Jadran' shop. I have met Chinese people who, when they heard where I was from, delightedly pronounced 'Ka-pe-tan Le-shi'⁴ and Bulgarians who enquired with incongruous rapture about 'Vegeta'.⁵ All these names and things hardly meant anything to me, they belonged to an early socialist Yugoslav past which I hardly knew was 'mine', but the recollection of them provoked the momentary prick of an indistinct emotion whose name or quality I was not able to determine at the time.

'If I haven't seen something for thirty or forty years, it will give me that intense "punch" of nostalgia', says Robert Opie, a passionate collector of objects from everyday life and the founder of a 'nostalgic' museum (The Museum of Advertising and Packaging) in Gloucester.⁶

4.

Things with a past, particularly a shared one, are not as simple as they might first appear from the perspective of the collector. In this 'post-communist' age it seems that 'Easterners' are most sensitive to two things: communality and the past. Everyone will first maintain that his post-communism is different, implying at the same time his conviction that life in his post-communism is closer to that of the Western democracies than that of the other (post-communist) countries. The 'Easterner' is reluctant to admit his post-communist trauma in public, nor does he have the will to try to articulate it. He has had enough communist traumas (he holds the copyright on them, too), but they have worn out, aged, and don't seem to hurt any more. The cursed 'homo duplex', mentally trained to separate his private life from the collective, weary of the constant ideological pressure to live facing towards the future, exhausted by the excessive amount of 'history' he has experienced, frightened by memories that keep popping up from somewhere, at this moment the 'Easterner' would most like to sink into the compliant and indifferent present, at least that's how it seems. It is only the younger and more honest of them, like the (former) East German playwright Thomas Oberlender, who will exclaim out loud, 'Why, I have two lives and one biography...!'

5.

Things with a past are not simple. Particularly at a time when we are witnesses and participants in a general trend of turning away from stable, 'hard' *history* in favour of changeable and 'soft' *memory* (ethnic, social, group, class, race, gender, personal and alien) and a new cultural phenomenon which, as Andreas Huyssen suggests, bears the ugly name of *musealization*. Indeed, a museal sensibility seems to be occupying ever

⁴ Kapetan Lesi, the handsome, brave hero of Yugoslav Partisan films shot in the early sixties, completely forgotten today. He seems to have 'died' in China as well.

⁵ 'Vegeta', seasoning for food, a popular Yugoslav export article, can still be found in Turkish shops in Berlin or Russian shops in New York's Brighton Beach. Together with 'Minas-coffee'—known affectionately as 'minasica'—'Vegeta' has become a cult object for the Yugoslav diaspora.

⁶ Unless you do these Crazy Things ...', an interview with Robert Opie, in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, eds, *The Culture of Collecting*, Cambridge 1994, p. 29.

larger chunks of everyday culture and experience. If you think of the historicizing restoration of old urban centres, whole museum villages and landscapes, the boom of flea markets, retro fashions, and nostalgia waves, the obsessive self-musealization per video recorder, memoir writing and confessional literature, and if you add to that the electronic totalization of the world on data banks, then the museum can indeed no longer be described as a single institution with stable and well-drawn boundaries. The museum in this broad amorphous sense has become a key paradigm of contemporary cultural activities.⁷

6.

If we accept the 'museum' as a paradigm of the contemporary sense of temporality, then, at least as far as European-American culture is concerned, the places we occupy in the museum and our attitude to the museum do nevertheless differ. For instance, although in the American intellectual market, the key questions of our time at the end of the century are—what is history and what memory, what is personal and what collective memory, and so on—it seems to the European outsider that the American attitude to the 'museum' is different from that of the European, particularly in the East. History, memory, nostalgia, these are concepts in which contemporary America has recognized a high-cultural therapy and, of course, commercial value. The stimulation of the recollection of different ethnic immigrant groups, encouraging the reconstruction of lost identities, opening immigrant museums, establishing chairs at American universities (which, in examining various cultural identities, are concerned with memory), the publishing industry, newspapers and television which readily commercialize the theme—all of this supports the idea of the new American obsession with 'musealization'. The American market contains everything, from documentary videocassettes of contemporary history to souvenirs of the recent past. Americans of all ages can purchase instant products to satisfy their 'historical' yearnings. And, while in America everything rapidly 'becomes the past', it seems that nothing disappears. Television broadcasts series and films which were watched once by grandfathers and are now watched by their grandsons. The old 'Star Trek' and 'Star Trek, the New Generation', the old 'Superman' and the 'Supermen' of all subsequent generations, are available simultaneously. In this way, the American lives a kind of eternal present, or at least that's how it seems to the superficial European outsider. The rich market of nostalgia seems to wipe out nostalgia, it appears that real nostalgia for something implies its real loss. But America does not know loss, or at least not in the sense that Europeans do. Thus, through the process of commercialization, but also through the elasticity of an attitude to recollection which is constantly changing (making and remaking, shaping and reshaping), nostalgia is transformed into its painless surrogate, at the same time as its object.⁸

⁷ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, London 1995, p. 14.

⁸ The artistic representation of history often follows the idea of the commercial surrogate. Thus the American artist David Lowenthal represents the Holocaust by using miniature children's toys—little SS-officers, little camps and camp inmates—photographed to reproduce well-known documentary scenes.

That, I repeat, is how it appears to the European outsider. Because what our European (or Euro-ego-centric) claims an absolute right to, without the slightest hesitation, is just that: History, and an understanding of History.

7.

Because for him, the European, History has been caught up in his private life, altered his biography; he was born in one country, lived in another and died in a third; it has caused him to change his identity like shirts; it has given him a feline elasticity. Sometimes it seems to him that, like a cat, he has nine lives...

Recently Europe produced the biggest souvenir in the world—the Berlin Wall. It shattered into millions of little souvenir pieces: some turned into senseless objects and ended up in the rubbish-bin, and others into pieces of shrapnel which opened wounds which had long since healed, and made new ones. Today Europe rummages through drawers of memories, particularly those which contain the traumatic files of the First World War, the Second World War, fascism and communism. This feverish activity, connected with remembering, may have its origin in the fear of the possibility of forgetting. At this moment, Europe is concerned with repeating the process of historical guilt: the old rubbish which European countries, in the process of creating and recreating their own memory, have shoved under each other's doors, is in the process of returning to its owners. The processes are often sensitive and painful, particularly in the relationship of (former) West and (former) East Germany. The politics of remembering is connected also with artistic questions of its representation, the media, its consumability, commercialization and morality. Europe is like the Teufelsberg with its contents bubbling out. (The Teufelsberg is the highest hill in Berlin, under its grassy surface lie millions of tons of Berlin ruins piled up after the Second World War). Old souvenirs which had previously surfaced—flags, relics, red and yellow stars, and black swastikas—are joined by new, still warm grenades, bullets and bombs freshly arrived from Bosnia.

8.

But let us return to a detail from the beginning of this story. Why did I tell my American acquaintances that my favourite book was *Winnie the Pooh*? Perhaps because for a moment I felt lonely, perhaps I wanted to be able to join them in the warmth of the collective steam of nostalgia by conjuring up a shared childhood, or perhaps, most likely, because I realized that an honest answer would have demanded too many explanatory footnotes and in the end would have remained untranslatable.

My favourite children's book was *The Hedgehog's House*. This little, warm, innocent book became the property of generation after generation of children born in Yugoslavia. Its author was Branko Copić. I knew a circle of Zagreb students who studied Lacan, Foucault and Derrida assiduously, but proclaimed the 'silly' but 'dear old *Hedgehog's House*' their cult book and amused themselves by reciting lines by heart. It was a free, nostalgic gesture, a little test of generational memory. Branko Copić, a Bosnian Serb, committed suicide twenty years ago, having previously foretold in

a dark postscript to one of his last books, all that would happen later. Today Branko Copić is a forgotten writer.⁹ One day, when the ruins are cleared, he will find his place, according to his blood group, in the history of Serbian literature. Maybe Bosnian, too—it depends on the generosity of spirit of the moment. In Croatia, Branko Copić no longer exists. For three reasons, it seems. The first is the war itself which is by its nature a human activity that encourages amnesia. The second is that Copić was a Serb. And the third reason is the fact that he belonged to the former, Yugoslav culture. If he still existed, the hand of a nostalgic reader might well reach for him. And at a time of erasing one memory and constructing a new one—that is, at a time of enforced amnesia and enforced remembrance—every nostalgia, even the most harmless, is, rightly, considered dangerous.

9.

If the reader envisages the state as a house, it will be easier for him to imagine that for many inhabitants of former Yugoslavia, along with the war and the disappearance of their country, many other things have been confiscated: not only their homeland and their possessions but also their memory. In the general and obvious misery, no one takes into account invisible losses. On the priority list of losses, both for the loser and for the observer, the first place is the loss of life itself, then the loss of those closest, then material goods. Only then come, if they ever do, intangible losses. To discuss them at a time of real death is inappropriate. The memory of *The Hedgehog's House* is an offensively luxurious emotion. However, this little book is not the only thing on the list of losses. And that list could be drawn up by some twenty-plus million inhabitants of the vanished country—if they really could, if they really wanted to, and if they knew who to do it for.

Over the last five years, media consumers could hear from journalists, television reporters, politicians, historians, intellectuals, writers, more or less the same story about the war in former Yugoslavia. In this interpretative package of the Balkan misfortune, there was a place for geographical maps and borders, national, religious and ethnic differences, languages and scripts, historical causes, the 'repressive' Yugoslav federal system, communism and post-communism, aggressors and victims, the repertoire of human evil, massacres, rapes and camps, the names of international negotiators and mediators, peacemakers and murderers, politicians and leaders. Numerous books have been published by historians and political analysts, journalists and writers, reporters and lovers of 'catastrophe tourism', stray inquisitives and politicians, photographers and hunters of strong emotions, experts on Eastern Europe and authorities on other people's misfortune. These numerous observers, participants and

⁹ A note by the Sarajevo journalist Branko Vuković describes a moving episode: a conversation with a young Sarajevo sniper of Muslim nationality. The soldier, who had 'freaked out', said that, remarkably, the only thing that really 'turned him on' was the book *Eagles Fly Early*. This children's book, by Branko Copić, is a highly emotive topos of the cultural memory of several generations of Yugoslavs. The episode is, of course, virtually untranslatable, its emotional impact, weight and symbolism can be understood at this moment only by former Yugoslavs, and only by those of them who are resistant to nationalist hatred—a minority, that is.

intermediaries, drawn by the spectacle of death, have accused one another of moral indifference and incompetence and scored for themselves intellectual, professional and moral points (though there is no cash desk where these could be counted), fighting over other people's land.

In this heap of spoken and written words, few have mentioned the ordinary people. The anonymous citizens of the former country were and have remained the indifferent statistics of the killed, dispersed, vanished, refugees, survivors, identified by national group as Muslims, Croats, Serbs... If for the local warlords people were simply indifferent cannon fodder, I wonder how it is that among the numerous interpreters of the post-Yugoslav misery so few pity the ordinary people. The misfortune of others is free and as a rule does not hurt. We may still pity, but it is hard for us to be in a position to comprehend the true dimensions of other people's loss. And those losses include such a difficult-to-grasp, many-faceted and complex thing as collective memory.

10.

Seen from outside, at this moment, the Balkan peoples resemble demented gravediggers. They appear stubbornly to confirm the dark stereotypes others have of them. Included in that repertoire of stereotypes is the idea that, throughout their history, the Balkan peoples have done nothing other than bury and dig up human bones. Now human corpses are being eaten by starving pigs or, at best, they end up in nameless, collective graves as a dark pledge to a 'brighter' future. And truly, the Balkan peoples are, it seems, most blithe when they are in a position to destroy each other's past—headstones, libraries, churches, monuments of cultural-historical value. Now they are confirming that they are masters of destruction: only true masters know how to remove one another's memory. Nor are they any more tender towards their own past: they will wipe it out or resurrect it, according to need, with the ease of a computer.¹⁰ Through their activity of digging up and ritually mourning human bones and burying fresh ones without funeral rites, the Balkan peoples are spinning in a diabolical circle: it is impossible for them to come to terms with their own past, present and future.

On a different, and more elegant, level, this could be also the story of Proust who was deprived of the 'key' to his remembrance, a madeleine. At first glance a trivial thing, an ordinary madeleine. However, in the Balkans that 'key' is taken by force from its owners. The 'key' only comes to the surface many years later, when there is no longer anyone who would know how to open the door with it, and when the confiscators, too, are long gone, when it has become a meaningless thing.

¹⁰ One of the freshest examples is the Croatian town of Knin. For several years Croatian state propaganda used Knin, 'the cradle of the Croatian kings', to construct national memory. Knin and its surroundings were populated by rebellious Croatian Serbs. In August 1995, when Knin was 'liberated'—that is, when the Croatian Serbs were driven out en masse—and when the Croatian flag was placed on the Knin fortress, the town lost not only its manipulative-propaganda value but also its 'memorial' value. At this moment, Knin is a town of ghosts, deserted, and plundered by the Croats themselves. There are identical examples on the Serb side. One such 'hot' manipulative topos in the Serbian national memory is Kosovo, inhabited by the Kosovo Albanians.

The citizens of former Yugoslavia suddenly found themselves in the situation of having two lives and one biography. The older ones could even count three lives in their biography. The new, 'post-communist', powers, taking over the knowledge of their communist predecessors or simply applying their own communist knowledge, know the great manipulative value of collective memory. For collective memory can be erased and rewritten, deconstructed, constructed and reconstructed, confiscated and reconfiscated, proclaimed politically correct or incorrect (in the communist language, suitable or unsuitable). The political battle is a battle for the territory of collective memory.

With the collapse of multinational Yugoslavia, the process began of confiscating the Yugoslav collective memory and its replacement by the construct of national memory. The war simply speeded up the process and radicalized the measures. Today, it seems, the work has been successfully completed: one memory has been erased in order to establish another.

In this process, some 'fortunates' have acquired the right to reclaim their 'property' confiscated some fifty years previously. This generous gesture depended on the general policy of the individual self-design of each former Yugoslav state, on the creation of its own national image. Thus, for instance, in Croatia the right to reclaim their confiscated memory was extended to those who lost the Second World War, the ageing political émigrés, the Ustashas, collaborators with Ante Pavelić's regime, the occasional guard in Croatian concentration camps, the occasional minister in Pavelić's government. The old men acquired a symbolic satisfaction: returning after so many years they were able here and there to see Ustasha symbols, here and there a street sign with the name of Mile Budak,¹¹ here and there the portrait of their leader. They were given the opportunity of rehabilitating their own past: they could not resist explaining to the Croatian public that the Croatian concentration camps during the Second World War were actually the most comfortable hotels. Some of them acquired a function in the new government, some published books, some found a fragment of their past and the hope of its complete restoration in a group of young Croatian neo-Nazis. Why was it they, and not others, who were given the right to the return of their property? Simply because they served the new authorities as welcome living fragments in constructing the national memory. These authorities are working rapidly on the design of the new Croatian state. By all accounts, they intend to repair Croatia's interrupted historical continuity—that famous continuity was, presumably, interrupted by the communists and the Serbs. Hence the connection with the four-year fascist Independent State of Croatia is presumably felt to be more natural than the lengthy connection with communist Yugoslavia.

All in all, today memory in the form of fragments and splinters of the past, the occasional symbol and the occasional souvenir, has been

¹¹ Minister and Croatian writer, the signatory of the racial laws in Pavelić's Nazi statelet

restored to the minority. For the sake of the minority, it has been denied to the majority, those for whom the construct called Yugoslavia had with time become their daily life.

12.

Today it turns out that many East European, former communist cultures had prepared their own death by collecting the material of collective memory. Thus for instance, from the first signs of its encroaching end, Russian alternative artists assiduously measured the pulse of the dying mammoth of communism. There was the work of Russian 'sots-artists'—the Soviet political kitsch in the paintings of Komar and Melamid; the Soviet everyday reality, 'byt', in the paintings and installations of Ilya Kabakov; the language of Soviet pop-songs, newspapers and the street in the poems of Dmitri Prigov; the linguistic-mental collocations taken from popular Soviet almanacs, school readers and textbooks in the linguistic creations of Lev Rubinstein; the kitsch of Soviet communal living in the installations of Larisa Zvezdochetova; apt-art, and so on. With the disappearance of its context, this whole artistic 'archaeology' of Soviet daily life has changed its original function. The sharp tones of artistic subversion have today acquired the soft patina of nostalgia. In other words, the difference between American pop-artists and their Americana and Russian sots-artists and their Sovietana is being established today, retrospectively. For while Warhol's Campbell soup may still be bought today in every American supermarket, the icons of Soviet daily life are disappearing. Whether they like it or not, the works of Russian sots-artists have consequently become the document of a vanished reality. Thanks to the assiduous, lengthy investigation of the mythology of Soviet daily life with which these artists were concerned, the epoch which is no more has left a vast array of artistic material. The intelligentsia—philosophers, cultural historians, sociologists, anthropologists—are all today concerned with investigating the various layers of 'Soviet' cultural memory, not avoiding (and not ashamed) to investigate the mechanisms of collective and personal nostalgia.¹²

The picture is, of course, incomplete and not all layers of collective memory are touched on equally. Particularly not the more delicate of them: Stalinist camps, but also the many years of shared life in the multinational and multiethnic community that was the Soviet Union.

13.

What stimulates nostalgia, that prick of indistinct emotion, is just as complex as the topography of our memory. Just as in the mechanism of dream, where the oneiric encounter with an insignificant and harmless object can provoke a quite disproportionate emotion, so with the mechanisms of nostalgia, unpredictable and hard to read. Nostalgia is not

¹² In her book *Common Places: Mythsologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass. 1994), Svetlana Boym ends her investigation of Soviet everyday life with the observation: 'And so it goes: one wishes to cure nostalgia through history, but ends up simply historicizing one's own nostalgia.'

subject to control, it is a subversive activity of our brain. It works with fragments, scents, touch, sound, melody, colour, its territory is absence, it is the capricious corrective to adaptable memory. The strategies of its activity are deceit, capriciousness, subversion, suddenness, shock and surprise. Nostalgia knows no hierarchy of values, the 'material' it deals with is not divided into good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable, clever and stupid—on the contrary, some 'silliness' is often its favoured choice.¹³

Precisely because of the elusive nature of nostalgia, the authorities in the new states of former Yugoslavia have coined the term *Yugonostalgia* and given it an unambiguous meaning. The word is used as political and moral disqualification: the *Yugonostalgic* is a suspicious person, a 'public enemy', a 'traitor', a person who regrets the collapse of Yugoslavia (and hence the collapse of communism, and communism is 'Serbo-Bolshevism!'), a *Yugonostalgic* is the enemy of democracy. The term 'Yugonostalgia' belongs to the new terminology of war.

14.

Whether nostalgia will one day succeed in articulating its object and determining its space is hard to predict. It is equally debatable whether such a thing, nostalgia, exists at this moment and, if it does, what is its nature. It is perfectly possible that the war has put an end to collective Yugo-memory, leaving behind only the desire for as speedy as possible oblivion.

Nameless ex-Yugoslav refugees scattered over all the countries and continents, have taken with them in their refugee bundles senseless souvenirs which nobody needs—a line of verse, an image, a scene, a tune, a tone, a word. In the same bundle of memory jostle fragments of past reality, which can never be put back together, and scenes of war horrors. It is hard for their owners to communicate all these shattered fragments to anyone, and with time they wrap themselves into a knot of untranslatable, enduring, soundless distress. Those who stayed and preserved a roof over their heads will adapt more quickly, will learn the words of the new times and forget the old.

Confiscated memory behaves like an incomplete body which, from time to time, suffers from the syndrome of the 'phantom limb'. They say that in Belgrade, in Serbia, people assuage their *Yugonostalgia* by listening to old hits by the Zagreb pop-singers Arsen Dedic and Gabi Novak. They say that in suburban taverns in Zagreb it happens that drunk

¹³ At one time, I had imagined a project of collecting 'mental souvenirs' of life in former Yugoslavia and asked my friends and acquaintances to participate. Regardless of social, cultural and generational differences, I was interested in knowing whether it was possible to identify a common corpus of emotional topoi in our memory. The meagre 'material' I collected proves that such research is impossible. Predrag Dojcinovic, a poet and essayist who lives in Amsterdam exile, contributed his 'souvenir', a description of the wrapping on 'Bucó' cheese, a little square of processed cheese with the hideous portrait of a fat boy on the wrapping. This detail suggests not only the capriciousness of nostalgia but also its 'untranslatability' into other cultures, in other words the exclusivity of collective memory, its absolute copyright.

people shout the songs of Lepa Brena,¹⁴ wondering later in their morning hangover 'what came over them'. They say that divided families and old friends meet in Skopje, in Macedonia—Skopje is the 'most natural' meeting place, there 'Yugoslav' products can be bought in the shops, and dusty, greasy photographs of Tito have not entirely disappeared from the walls. They say that when the Vovodina-born pop-singer Djordje Balasevic held a concert in Ljubljana, many people from Zagreb travelled there, and also many from Belgrade. They say that in Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana, videocassettes of old 'Yugoslav' films are sold illegally. In Skopje, they say, a cassette of 'Yugo-hits' from the sixties is selling like hot cakes. Even the Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, one of the fiercest proponents of the confiscation of Yugo-memory, in a speech at a moment of joyful excitement because of the 'great Croatian military victory' in Krajina (or the expulsion of the Serbs who lived there) accidentally used a Serbism, the Serbian version of the word 'to organize'!¹⁵

And, as we are discussing confiscators, let us mention also Slobodan Milosevic, the first 'player' in the Yugoslav game of destruction. Stealing the name of Yugoslavia and applying it to Serbia and Montenegro, by simply manipulating the name, in other words, Milosevic confiscated the symbolic territory of possible community, therefore also of Yugonostalgia. The ordinary, fearful citizen of former Yugoslavia, when trying to explain the simplest things, gets entangled in a net of humiliating footnotes. 'Yes, Yugoslavia, but the former Yugoslavia, not this Yugoslavia of Milosevic's...' 'Yes, nostalgia, perhaps you could call it that, but, you see, not for Milosevic, but for that...former Yugoslavia...' 'For the former communist Yugoslavia?!' 'No, not for the state, not for communism...' 'For what, then?' 'It's hard to explain, you see...' 'Do you mean for that singer, for Djordje Balasevic, then?!' 'Yes, for the singer...' 'But that Balasevic of yours is a Serb, isn't he?!'

15.

Yugoslaviana—the mythology of everyday life which the citizens of former Yugoslavia built and shared for fifty years—is today sketching its outlines in the air. When chance brings them together, people with two lives and one biography—ex-Yugoslav émigrés, exiles, refugees and citizens of the new states of former Yugoslavia—they suddenly discover the charm of collective memory. Many are astonished at the realization that 'all that' existed and disappeared 'just like that' without their even noticing. It occurs to some of them that the East European 'Trabant' is now a museum piece, while the Yugoslav 'Fico'¹⁶ has simply disappeared and it

¹⁴ Lepa Brena, an unusually popular singer of 'newly-composed traditional' songs, the last 'adrenaline' unifying the cultural topos of the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia. Up until the last moment, she declared herself a Yugoslav. Today, Lepa Brena, a Muslim by nationality, in order to save the remnants of her market, declares herself a Serb.

¹⁵ The film director Željimir Žilnik conducted an unusually interesting test of collective memory in his documentary film *Marshal Tito Among the Serbs Again*. He took an actor with a remarkable physical resemblance to Tito, dressed him in a marshal's uniform and let him walk the streets of Belgrade. Although all the passers-by knew that he was a surrogate, nevertheless, many of them, forgetting themselves, spoke with the surrogate as though he were Tito himself.

¹⁶ The first car manufactured in Yugoslavia.

never occurred to anyone to put it in a museum. And what kind of museum anyway? Because where could you find anyone, in the new national states preoccupied with building their own national ego, prepared to take over discarded 'foreign' rubbish, fifty-years of 'Yugoslav' cultural memory? Even if it was done, who would be able to read it properly in the context of completely altered codes? For memory consists of numerous components which demand numerous explanatory footnotes, and, even with the footnotes, who could understand something that entwined, grew together and evolved into a shared life over fifty years? Who would accept the articulation of a vanished cultural everyday life (jokes, objects, television series, newspapers, pop-music, language, humour, those warmest commonplaces of collective memory) and invest in it the effort required to 'musealize' it, even partially, when real museums and old libraries are being transformed by the demented Balkan gravediggers into dust and ash?

16.

*Where do you come from?
From Yugoslavia.
Is there any such country?
No, but that's still where I come from.*

This anonymous quotation comes from the beginning of a book entitled *Children of Atlantis*, a collection of essays by young people, ex-Yugoslavs, refugees from the war.¹⁷ It is said that language produces reality. In the story of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the war, there are numerous cruel and terrifying examples that confirm this thesis. The word 'Atlantis', which refers to the myth of the disappearance of a country punished by the gods, erupted as a metaphor for Yugoslavia with the eruption of the war. The choice of Atlantis as a metaphor only confirms the general sense of its definitive disappearance.

We take our tale about collective memory back to the very beginning, to Cicero who, in *De Oratore* tells the story of the poet, Simonides of Ceos, the 'inventor' of memory.¹⁸ According to the story, a nobleman of Thessaly named Scopas invited Simonides to a banquet at his palace so he could write a poem in honour of the host. Having received a message that someone was looking for him, Simonides got up in the middle of the banquet, left the palace and went outside. While he was outside the ceiling of the palace suddenly collapsed, killing the host and his guests. Their bodies were so crushed that the relatives of the victims could not identify them when they came to take them for burial. However, Simonides, who survived, remembered where each one had been sitting at the table. The story says that thanks to Simonides, the inventor of memory, the relatives were after all able to bury their dead.

Although in this story the word 'memoria' means 'mnemotechnique', which is one of the five parts of Cicero's rhetoric, I shall take the liberty

¹⁷ Zdenko Lesic, ed., *Children of Atlantis: Voices from the Former Yugoslavia*, Oxford 1995.

¹⁸ I quote Cicero's story from Frances A. Yates's book, *The Art of Memory*, London 1992. I am grateful to Nenad Ivic for drawing my attention to this account.

of telling it in my own way. The story of Simonides tells us that the birth of memory preceded the accident, the collapse of the roof, death, disappearance. The story of Yugoslavia and its disintegration could be likened metaphorically to the scene of the banquet and the table with people sitting round it as the roof collapses. Simonides, asked by the relatives to identify the victims, does not manage to do his mnemotechnical job, because suddenly the remaining walls collapse, killing him and the relatives who had come to bury their dead. The new witnesses of the scene, struck by this double misfortune, are, admittedly, in a position to identify the victims, but only those they remember from the places where they happened to be when the remaining walls collapsed. And so each one remembers and mourns his own. The other victims—not to mention the original ones—do not exist.

The past must be articulated in order to become memory. The citizens of Yugoslavia have been deprived of their common past. That past will probably never have a chance to be articulated into a harmonious collective memory, but it will still be hard to erase as it came to life naturally, just as everyday life itself comes to life. In exchange for what has been denied them, the citizens are offered the construct of national memory, which many accepted with enthusiasm, thinking it was a firm foundation for a better future. However, the construct has not been adopted, because it has not had a chance to be, nor could it have been transformed into collective memory, because, in order for that to happen, generations would have to live it as their everyday reality.

So our story slips away in the opposite direction and instead of being about *remembering* it becomes a story about *forgetting*. As usual, things sink into oblivion, as Atlantis sank into the sea. So real lives and real people migrate into a parable. And this form of story-telling poses just one question: what was it that so angered the gods?

Translated by Celia Hawkesworth

Building Societies: Stakeholding in Practice and Under Threat

In the beginning, building societies were invented by ordinary workers as democratic self-help organizations.¹ The industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century brought a flood of workers into the cities—most of these to live in appalling conditions and at the mercy of their landlord and employer. The idea of the building society came from conversations in pubs and taverns when workers complained to each other about these conditions. The very first building society—founded in 1775—was named after the landlord of the Golden Cross Inn in Birmingham, where its members met.

At first they were building clubs, in which the members used their money to buy materials and their skills to build houses. These developed into ‘money clubs’—a simple savings society, to build decent houses. Each member of the society paid an agreed weekly amount into the society’s funds. When enough money had been saved, a house was built—with a ballot deciding which member would get the house. These societies were run by their members and were

bound together by personal trust and a mutual self-interest—every member knew that their savings would help both themselves and their colleagues. The interests of the savers and the borrowers—the people who got the houses—were the same. Not surprisingly, the idea caught on, and by the end of the eighteenth century there were perhaps as many as fifty building societies in the Midlands, Yorkshire and Lancashire.

The British middle class watched these developments with some unease for they were independent working-class initiatives which could lead to economic advancement and then demands for political participation. It was the genius of the Victorians to find a way of channelling the building society movement into something more acceptable. At a time when trades unions and the Chartist movement posed a frightening political challenge to the established order, the rapidly growing Victorian middle class of professionals and clerics saw the potential for building societies to be part of a strategy to build a respectable—and non-threatening—working class. They found a perfect way of combining profit with virtue.

All of the original societies had been 'terminating' societies—when all the members had been housed, the society was wound up. The Victorians developed the idea further, inventing the 'permanent' society, which borrowed from the public at large and so ended the personal bond between its members. (The Leeds—one of the big names on the High Street today—used to be called the Leeds Permanent). The permanent society enabled the affluent Victorian middle class to earn a return on their savings whilst promoting the virtues of home ownership and thrift amongst the skilled working class—the ability to borrow was nearly always related to the previous savings record of the borrower. Aware of the connection of the old societies with the ale-house, many of the new societies were promoted by Christians and temperance campaigners—the original Abbey Building Society was started in London's Abbey Road church. In sum,

the building society idea did not challenge any of the tenets dear to that [Victorian] society. It did not hand out charity, it encouraged self help. It provided no haven for the undeserving, it encouraged those who worked to be respectable. And it showed the outward and visible signs of grace because it made money safely for its supporters.²

Because the societies were built on the reputation and ideals of their working-class forerunners and because involvement in them was seen as part of the middle classes' philanthropic work, the new societies inherited the mutual structure of the first societies—they had no shareholders, no dividends, no highly paid directors. Full-time staff were employed from the ranks of the middle classes, skilled in the new professions such as accounting, but at modest wages and the directors were selected from the local aristocracy and professional and commercial classes.

Building societies were allowed to grow because they posed no commercial threat to established financial interests. In the Victorian age, banks

¹ The author would like to thank Richard Belfield, Alison Turner, Paul Dwyer and Najma Khazi for their work which made this article possible

² Enid Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations*, London 1974.

were not remotely interested in small savings or in financing housing—they were predominantly interested in financing trade. The Stock Exchange was overwhelmingly concerned with financing imperial and overseas ventures. Building societies were never going to move into these areas as they were forbidden from doing so by Act of Parliament, which also helped ensure that people's money was safe. But today building societies do pose a real threat to entrenched financial interests, and these interests have turned against them.

The growth of the building societies this century has been close to a textbook example of managerially-led development. To secure more savings, they have opened branch networks, and to achieve economies of scale, there have been mergers. But for the first seven decades, this took place within a regulated framework of cooperation. There was an agreement between building societies to maintain a diversity in terms of the size of societies, there was a collective strategy on interest rates—that is, there was no competition—and they were not allowed by law to do much more than lend on mortgages. This enabled the building societies to pull off what is folly for orthodox banking—to borrow short and lend long. As a result, Britain had a ready supply of relatively cheap mortgage funds, which financed a massive increase in owner occupation.

Loans for Respectable People

As many aspiring borrowers found during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, this money may have come cheap, but it did not come unconditionally. Many of the Victorian values lived on: respectable middle- and working-class people got a mortgage so long as they were married, white, in secure jobs, had saved in the past, were modest in their aspirations and wanted to live in a 'suitable' neighbourhood. Whole areas of Britain's cities were unacceptable to many building societies—confined by a red line, inside of which they would not lend. Single, or gay, or self-employed, and so on, and the building society was not interested.

At the same time, the formal ownership structure of the societies was unchanged. They remained mutual organizations. Obviously with the end of the personal bond between the members, the nature of this mutuality had changed. The societies made profits each year, which they kept as reserves and which determined the extent to which they could borrow money. These reserves were effectively held in trust for all the members of the society—borrowers and lenders—who controlled the society on a one-person, one-vote basis. This ownership was quite unlike that of a shareholder in a limited company: it was not transferable, was not tied to the underlying value of the assets and was not limited—new members could join the society.

On paper this made building societies remarkably democratic institutions in which the assets were held in common, not personally. In practice, democratic participation was negligible. Again, building societies looked like a textbook study—this time of Michels's Iron Law of Oligarchy in a commercial environment. The only opportunity to influence what went on in a building society was by voting at the Annual General Meeting. Organizing a mass movement inside a business in

which the Board of Directors controlled communication with the hundreds of thousands—and sometimes millions—of members was impossible. And, of course, building society bosses did not want active participation in the society's affairs by its members—they occupied, after all, a very enviable position as the heads of massive financial institutions, free from shareholders' or savers' intervention. There were sporadic outbursts of opposition from obsessive enthusiasts but, whenever they looked like being even a small threat, the leaders were quickly co-opted onto the board. Left-wing critiques of building societies tended to concentrate on these failings.³

Building societies were not, then, perfect. But they were different and importantly so. The absence of shareholders meant that they did not need to make profits as high as other financial institutions—they could offer a better deal to their members/customers. Because they were not driven by a wish to maximize profits, they could make decisions which tended to favour the public over the profit-and-loss account. They were commercial operations and they needed to make profits, so these may have amounted to differences of emphasis—but it was a difference. Interestingly, every survey of customer satisfaction shows that building societies rate much better than banks—even among poorer customers.⁴

As building societies were, overall, still doing good—all parties approved of home ownership and no other financial institutions wanted to fulfil their role—the system proved remarkably enduring. Things started to change in the 1970s. With the increasing affluence of their members, building society managers began to offer a much wider range of services, such as cheque books, credit cards and insurance. At the same time, the big banks realized that mortgage lending was a profitable business and started moving in. By the end of the decade, it was clear that building societies were at a major disadvantage in competing in the personal finance sector on the high street and as their members wanted a wider range of services, they faced a slow commercial death. In 1980 their trade body—the Building Societies' Association set up a committee to recommend what should be done. This committee, under the chief General Manager of the Halifax Building Society, John Spalding, reported in 1983. Spalding's recommendations have to be seen in their social and political context. After the 1974–79 Labour government, enthusiasm for cooperative and collective ideas was at a low ebb—especially amongst the managerial class. A tide of corporate modernism was beginning to sweep through British life. This was not the moment at which largely Tory-voting building society bosses were going to make a big pitch to argue for the concept of mutuality, not least because the government seemed keen to privatize the other mutual part of Britain's financial system, the Trustee Savings Banks (of which more later). The Spalding report reflected the prevailing mood of building societies—they wanted a relaxation on the requirements to send documents to their members, they wanted the freedom to compete with the High Street banks in a number of areas and, although they wanted to maintain their

³ See Paul Barnes, *Building Societies: The Myth of Mutualism*, London 1984.

⁴ See, for example, the National Consumers' Council survey, conducted by MORI, of attitudes of poorer customers.

mutual status, they also wanted the freedom to convert themselves into a limited company if they chose. Virtually all of this—and more—the government gave them in the 1986 Building Societies Act.

The Act was preceded by a period of consultation, so there was plenty of chance to ensure that the management-driven aspirations of the building societies were well accounted for. In retrospect it seems as though the legislators did not fully realize what was going on. One of those consulted was Peter Birch, the head of what was then Britain's second largest building society, the Abbey National. Birch had joined the Abbey in 1984 after a career at Nestlé and Gillette. He knew nothing about building societies and seemed to care even less. Soon after his arrival he embarked on changing the culture of an organization which had judged its success by its size and its ability to serve its members, to one which judged success by profits and saw itself as selling products to customers.

Birch was one of those who thought societies should be allowed to abandon mutual status and it is now clear that the legislators misjudged his determination to succeed. The chair of the House of Commons standing committee which considered the Building Societies Bill was Labour MP Ken Weetch, now a professional lobbyist. Today Weetch admits that the Act was a failure—his committee did not foresee the resolve of building societies to convert themselves from mutual organizations to public limited companies. Although the process of conversion was allowed under the Act, they felt there were so many safeguards and hoops to go through that no one would choose this course. After all, other aspects of the Act gave the societies the powers they needed to compete with the High Street banks. Yet, in a series of court cases, the Abbey made its way through the Act and found a way of giving its members a financial inducement to change from being a mutual to become a bank. By later standards, this inducement was not a great deal—in the low hundreds of pounds—but if someone comes along and offers you £200 to give up something you never knew you had and do not value, it is a very tempting offer.

There was, in fact, quite a campaign against the conversion, and the Abbey were sufficiently worried to mount a series of road-shows to put their case across. At these they allowed members of the opposing side to speak. The main argument which the opponents marshalled was that the assets of the society belonged to all members—past, present and future, that the current members held these in trust, and that the concept of mutuality was worth preserving. Interestingly, at virtually every meeting there was a majority against conversion. But the postal voters—who had not had the benefit of hearing the case against conversion—voted with the directors.

The 'Myth' of Mutuality

The view of the Abbey directors, that mutuality was of no further use, reflected the predominant ideology of the times. By the end of the 1980s, large sections of the publicly owned economy—gas, telecommunications, electricity, water and so on—had been turned into profit-maximizing companies which were legally bound to owe a first duty to

their shareholders. A circular from stockbrokers Phillips and Drew in 1990 summarized the position well: 'Building societies are not mutual organizations...Mutuality is...a myth when it comes to modern day building societies'. Looking to the future it read: 'calling oneself a mutual organization will have no advantage whatsoever.' The report was written for Phillips and Drew by the firm's building society analyst, John Wriglesworth, of whom we will hear more.

The Abbey produced two main arguments in favour of conversion. First, that it needed access to more capital to expand its business, and second, that as a mutual building society it could not move into some areas of business in which it wanted to operate. As similar arguments are being used today by those societies which want to convert to banks, it is worth looking at the Abbey record in detail, to see whether in practice conversion has brought the benefits for which it hoped.

There is no doubt that it raised capital—£800 million on the floatation in July 1989—but much of this money appears to have been wasted. And there is no doubt that it has expanded into new areas—but, in many of these, it could have done so anyway and this expansion has often been in pursuit of management objectives—not serving the needs of its customers.

When it floated on the stock market, the Abbey said that its estate agency business was to be a 'source of strategic growth and an outlet for core business products.' It has been a disaster, making losses of almost £250 million until it was finally sold off in 1993. The Abbey also said that it would develop 'modestly and prudently' in Europe. At the last count, losses here have also exceeded £200 million. Despite losses of this proportion, the Abbey's overall pre-tax profits have risen from £352 million in 1987 to over £1 billion. But the main reason is the traditional mortgage and money market operations—which existed when it was a mutual business. And for the advantage of being a bank, over the last seven years, the Abbey has had to pay out dividends of nearly £1 billion.⁶ In other words, it would have been better to stay as a building society. And, indeed, Abbey's record since 1989 compares very unfavourably with that of the Halifax, which stayed a building society during this period. In 1994 Peter Davies appeared before the House of Commons Treasury and Civil Service Committee; it is hard to disagree with the sentiments of the somewhat cynical Labour member who said to him: 'So access to the Stock Market and these famous [share] issues, which banks regularly make to recapture the dividends they have paid out the preceding few years, was the game you wanted to get into?'⁷

Earlier this year, I interviewed Peter Birch for a *Panorama* television programme about building societies, and asked him what exactly it was that he had been able to do as a bank which he could not have done as a building society. He listed the companies they had taken over—Scottish

³ Building Societies Research, UBS Phillips and Drew, August 1990.

⁶ Figures taken from Abbey National published *Report and Accounts*

⁷ House of Commons Treasury and Civil Service Committee, *Minutes of Evidence*, 21 November 1994.

Mutual (an insurance company), First National Finance (a hire-purchase company) and a joint venture with Commercial Union. As a building society, they could not have launched these take-overs and, if they had, they would have used up all of the society's resources.

In fact, as the figures above show, a large amount of the society's resources have been used up covering losses and paying dividends to a group of shareholders who did not even exist seven years ago. But the answer highlights the main driving force behind the wish to convert—to satisfy management ambitions. The question for the members of the Abbey National Building Society in 1988 was this: would their interests be served by conversion to a plc? The directors assured them that they would. And there is little doubt that their interests would be served by the Abbey expanding its range of services to provide insurance and personal loans; but it could have done this without abandoning mutual status—indeed it already provided insurance services through an arrangement with an insurance company. If the members had been asked, 'do you want to give up your society so that the managers have some money to go on a take-over binge?', they might have voted differently.

Since 1989 there have been further changes in the personal finance market in this country which have put pressure on the building societies. First, their main business—mortgage lending—has stopped growing as the pace of home ownership growth has slackened—with almost 70 per cent of the country now home owners, the prospects for further growth are limited. At the same time, a large number of other companies are being allowed into the personal finance market, as the arrival of Virgin and Marks & Spencer bears witness. And finally, technological change in which computers and cash-dispensers replace counter staff means that there is considerable over-capacity in the banking and savings market.

Acting Against the Evidence

All of these are common enough business problems. The standard response to them is to merge, reduce costs, improve services and expect a fall in profits as a result of the competition. But some building societies are saying that the answer is to convert from being mutual organizations into shareholder-owned banks. The experience of the Abbey clearly does not support this view and no other evidence has been produced in its favour. Indeed, rather the opposite.

In February this year, the American finance house, Merrill Lynch, published a study which examined all of the business arguments for converting to a plc and found them wanting. Merrill Lynch looked first at the case for converting to a plc as a way of raising new capital and expanding through take-over. Building societies cannot raise equity capital and cannot embark on hostile take-overs, but what Merrill wanted to find out was whether there was any evidence to support the belief that these freedoms brought benefits—the ability to get bigger fast and to diversify. A rigorous analysis of all the available data led Merrill to conclude that 'the economic case for... building societies... to convert to plc status

is by no means compelling', adding that 'building society regulation does not restrict institutions that want to remain retail financial firms.'⁸

Despite this, within the last eighteen months several major building societies have decided to abandon mutual status. The Cheltenham and Gloucester has been taken over by Lloyds Bank. Worried that it was too small to survive, it examined the options for the future. It claims that its first objective was 'to operate to the financial benefit and in the interest of [its] members', even though the sell-out removed the members' interests and replaced them with those of shareholders. The C&G rejected a merger with another building society on the grounds that such mergers can lead to a clash of cultures, apparently ignoring the fact that there is an even greater clash of cultures between a mutual and a profit-maximizing company.

The National and Provincial have been taken over by the Abbey National, despite the fact that at the time it paid a higher rate of interest to its savers than the Abbey.⁹ And the Abbey made their priorities immediately clear by announcing the closure of over three hundred of the N&P's 'community branches'—small sub-branches in rural areas—on the grounds that they were not sufficiently profitable. Other building societies joining the rush to be banks include the Alliance and Leicester, the Woolwich and the Leeds which is being taken over by the largest building society of all—the Halifax, which is also turning itself into a bank. By the end of next year, almost 70 per cent of the assets of the building society movement—until recently owned collectively by its millions of savers—will have been transferred to the hands of shareholders.

The building societies who are converting all marshal roughly the same arguments—it will give them the flexibility to compete in the swiftly changing personal finance market. They make such claims despite the work of organizations like Merrill Lynch, and despite the fact that a new Building Society Act is proposed by the government which, in the words of one of the societies not converting, will mean that 'There is absolutely no restriction in the current legislation that prevents us doing what we want as a personal financial services organization.'¹⁰

The most remarkable convert to the cause of becoming a bank has been Jon Foulds, chairman of the Halifax. From an old Quaker Yorkshire textile family but with a career in the City of London he was, until very recently known as the 'high priest of mutuality'. As recently as 1992 he said: 'it is easier as a mutual to provide the best customer service whilst remaining financially strong and fully competitive.' In 1994, the society explained its policy of paying high rates to savers by referring to its

⁸ David Miles and Richard Coleman, *Can Building Societies Survive?*, Merrill Lynch & Co, February 1996.

⁹ See the Transfer Document for the transfer of the N&P to the Abbey National plc, February 1996, p. 60 'The Abbey National intends to continue to offer competitive rates to savers. At present these are, on average... slightly lower than the equivalent rates currently offered by the [N&P] Society.'

¹⁰ Dr John Winklesworth, Director of the Bradford and Bingley, in interview with *Panorama*, April 1996.

'mutual obligation.' When I met Foulds in April this year, he admitted that the Halifax currently had no problem getting the capital it needed, and when I asked him what particular activity he could undertake as a bank, which he could not as a building society, he said: 'There isn't a specific [activity], but this is a question of the dynamic of the marketplace... We are not restricted at the moment but [there may be] future changes in retail markets we might wish to follow... This is a question of the dynamic of the marketplace, I can't give you one example now.'¹¹ It was not, it has to be said, an impressive performance. But Foulds gave one reason for the switch from mutual to bank which goes to the heart of what is going on. Explaining his Damascene conversion, he said: 'I became increasingly aware that we were using reserves that had been built up to buttress the savings of our members as risk capital in areas where mutuality played no part... and I felt very uncomfortable with that.'¹²

Foulds was referring to what many societies have claimed is a dilemma, and have used as an explanation for changing from a mutual organization to one with shareholders. A building society is meant to be run in the interests of its members who are by definition its customers. But some of the things which building society managers want to do may not be in the interest of all of these members. If, for example, they buy an insurance company so that they can offer insurance to their existing members, they bring into the society a lot of new customers and, if the purchase goes wrong, they may threaten the security of the existing members' savings. Foulds refers to this as the 'duality' of the customer-member relationship which, he argues 'has got a bit muddy recently.' This argument has recently become the bedrock of the case against mutuality—'Mutuality has served us well in the past and current legislation may let us move into new areas, but the real problem is that the interests of millions of different customers cannot be reconciled within one ownership structure and the introduction of shareholders avoid any such confusion.'

Yet this argument is demonstrable rubbish. Leading City accountants Touche Ross looked at it and said: 'The number of customer/members and range of products should not in themselves affect the viability of mutual status.'¹³ The Touche Ross report quoted the convincing example of the Automobile Association—a mutual organization with eight million members which manages to deal with a wide range of businesses and customers very successfully. When I interviewed Foulds, I challenged him on his claim that the mutual structure caused confusion. He asked me for an example which showed how mutuality could work. I quoted the AA and he responded by saying he knew nothing about it, so could not comment.

Free to Make Money

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the shareholder company is being embraced by the managers of building societies simply as an article of

¹¹ In interview with *Panorama*, April 1996

¹² Ibid (untransmitted section)

¹³ *Building Societies — a Future or a Past?*, Touche Ross, 1995

faith. This runs, of course, with the spirit of the 1980s in which the government aggressively promoted the idea of a corporate mono-culture in which state-owned, local authority-owned, publicly owned and mutual organizations had no place. The ideological dimension of this argument was starkly illustrated by the evidence which Peter Birch of the Abbey gave to the House of Commons Treasury Committee in 1984. Over the years, building societies have accumulated large profits—these profits are reinvested in the business and provide the reserves for ‘a rainy day’ when the society may lose money. The reserves belong to the members who receive no return on them—unlike shareholders who receive dividends. This situation incensed Birch who, in his written evidence said: ‘This gives the societies an artificially low cost of capital’ and ‘distorts the market.’ In his verbal evidence, he elaborated on this point, complaining that this meant there was not ‘a level playing field’ in the financial services market.¹⁴

The Birch argument has a familiar ring. At the beginning of the 1970s, the government was trying to decide the future of the Trustee Savings Banks—a loose association of savings banks across Britain run by local worthies and without any shareholders. The job of making recommendations was given to Sir John Page, formerly the Treasurer of Manchester City Council. Page suggested that the banks be merged into a single body and formally turned into a mutual bank—competing directly with the High Street Banks. The High Street Banks objected on the grounds that it would be unfair competition to have a bank without shareholders. (Page ignored them but, come the 1980s, the government agreed and the TSB was sold off—with disastrous consequences.)

The Birch argument—now peddled by many—is that the only really effective form of accountability in an enterprise is that provided in the shareholder business. Again, this is demonstrably not the case. The Merrill Lynch study concluded:

The whole subject of accountability is probably misguided. First, the sanction imposed by the stock market upon the management of quoted companies have hardly proved themselves to be very effective... Second, there really is no evidence that the management of building societies have taken advantage of a lack of accountability to pursue inappropriate goals.¹⁵

This view is endorsed by the work at Loughborough University which concluded that there is ‘no unambiguous evidence’ that public limited companies solve the problems of management accountability better than mutuals.¹⁶

So, what is the driving force behind the wish of building society bosses to become public limited companies? There are clearly a number of forces at work, of which the ideological commitment to the shareholder-based enterprise is one. But mainly, it is the uncontrolled management

¹⁴ Memorandum submitted by Abbey National plc to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee and verbal evidence, November 1994

¹⁵ Miles and Coleman, *Can Building Societies Survive?*

¹⁶ Drake, Howcroft and Llewellyn, *The Future of Building Societies*, December 1995 (unpublished).

imperative—both the wish to be free as businessmen involved in the exciting world of take-overs and share flotations, and the chance to get rich.

Let us examine the background, for example, of Jon Foulds. Thirty-three years at venture capital company 3i, and when—last March—the Halifax take-over of the mutual insurer Clerical and Medical was announced, he said: 'It is fun to be doing deals again.'¹⁷ And equally instructive is his remark in the wake of the collapse of Barings when the leaders of large financial institutions were called in to help mount a rescue. Despite the Halifax being bigger than Abbey National plc, it was not asked to help out. 'I was chairman of a building society not a bank', complained Foulds.¹⁸ But there is more at stake than status. Look at what has happened to the pay of Peter Birch, boss of the Abbey. When it was a building society, he was earning £173,000 a year; now he is on £450,000—this is a much bigger increase than his opposite number at the Halifax. And, of course, Birch can own shares in the Abbey now that it is a plc. In total, his holding is worth more than £1.8 million.

These are not arguments, of course, which are put to building society members when they are asked to vote on conversion. Indeed, there is no *argument*, the management just put their case—the most convincing part of which is a large cheque. Since the Abbey flotation, building societies have found ways of giving larger and larger amounts of money or shares to building society members when the society converts itself into a bank. There are few people who will vote against getting a cheque for anything between £500 and £5000 in what has become the only election in which what is effectively bribery is legal.

But, on a long-term view, it is probably a mistake to take this bribe. Because the fact is that building society customers get a better deal than bank customers. Recently the Consumers' Association calculated that over a five-year period, £10,000 in an average building society account would make £380 more than the same amount in a bank account. On average, mortgages are cheaper, too. For someone with a mortgage *and* some savings, the difference can easily be as high as £1,500 over five years. And in individual savings products, building societies consistently outshine banks.¹⁹

The reasons for this are simple. First, building societies are more efficiently managed in that they have more customers per branch. This is worth emphasizing since many market-based arguments claim that building societies are inefficient because there is no shareholder discipline and so managers are free to engage in 'managerial diversion'—maintaining their own jobs and those of the staff—at the expense of customers. As Ingham and Thompson have demonstrated, this is just not factually correct.²⁰ Second, building societies have no shareholders to whom they have to pay dividends—this money can go to customers.

¹⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 30 March 1996.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Which?*, February 1996

²⁰ Hilary Ingham and Steve Thompson, *Executive Compensation and Deregulation in UK Building Societies*, Accounting and Business Research, vol 23, no 91a

Taken together, these factors demonstrate clearly how it is possible to have a viable business constructed around a different capital structure than the conventional plc. In recent months, some of the societies have started to appeal to customers on the basis of their mutual structure. Amongst the most fervent advocates of mutuality is the director of Strategy and Communication at the Bradford and Bingley Building Society—John Wriglesworth; the same John Wriglesworth who only six years ago, when at stockbrokers Philips and Drew, was proclaiming the death of mutuality. Using Bank of England statistics, he has calculated that over the last ten years, Britain's savers and borrowers would have been more than £24 billion better off if banks had been building societies!²¹

An Alternative to the plc

But the case for building societies stretches further than consumers' pockets. The very fact that it is hard for a building society to be taken over—because there is no market in them as there is in companies quoted on the stock exchange—means that many building societies are regional businesses. This increases the chance of them feeling a sense of identity with the area they serve and of their adopting a business strategy which—whilst seeking profit—puts other considerations ahead of shareholder value. Across Britain there are large regional societies devising imaginative policies which, for example, help old and poorer people improve their homes, finance the building of new homes to rent, and restore—rather than demolish—the housing stock. In addition, there are systemic advantages to a diversity of business size, ownership and structure in any section of the economy. It can bring stability and avoid the well-known 'bandwagon' effect in financial institutions in which they all, for example, lend to property speculators or let people build up debt on credit cards.

In all this, one is describing just the sort of institution which sounds as though it should be part of the Labour Party's stakeholder society. A business structure which defines the relationship between capital and the people differently; a structure which has the *capacity* to introduce different values into business; a structure which offers the *chance* of a form of democratic participation in business (I stress the conditionals). Unfortunately, however, the Labour party's commitment to the idea is lukewarm. Last year their Treasury spokesman Alastair Darling made a keynote speech to the Building Societies' Association. His message? 'Think long and hard before surrendering' mutuality. Yet, 'We don't believe it is for the government of the day to say whether or not a particular society should remain a mutual'²²

Why should the Labour Party should be so nervous about this? Why shouldn't they say 'Mutuality is good for the consumer, good for the economy and good for the country'? The immediate explanation lies in the ideological shift in the Labour Party. Last year Alastair Darling admitted: 'All [company] boards ought to be under pressure to do their

²¹ Bradford and Bingley Economics Unit, January 1996.

²² Speech to BSA Annual Lunch, 9 November 1995

best they can for their...shareholders.'²³ This acceptance that shareholders come first is at complete odds with the stakeholding approach in which others have a stake in the way a company is managed, and sometimes those interests come ahead of shareholders.

The deeper historical explanation of Labour's lack of enthusiasm for mutual organizations lies in their being a party of producers rather than consumers. Workers' rights and workers' control have been at the centre of much of their politics. Building societies, like the banks, have been employers with conventional management structures. The producer focus of the Labour Party made it impossible to see the good things in institutions which were far from perfect. One of the failings of the intellectual repositioning of the party has been its incapacity to forge this tradition with the interests of consumers, who are only workers in a different guise.

It is not however, too late. The fightback by some mutuals, such as the Bradford and Bingley and the Nationwide, together with signs of an apparent change of heart by the government, suggests that, even if all the planned conversions go ahead, something like a third of the existing assets will remain in mutual hands. And many of the conversions will not be completed by the time of the next Labour government. It would be possible simply to stop all further conversions, including those announced but not completed. It would also be possible to stop the demutualization of large sections of the mutual insurance sector which looks like following the building societies. Again, there is no evidence supporting the benefits of such a move. A study—this time from the University of Edinburgh—concluded that policy-holders got a better deal from mutuals and that it was only management interests which were driving the move towards shareholder companies.²⁴

On every front, the case for mutually owned businesses is powerful; the case for converting to public limited companies is remarkably weak. And the need for a mutual sector may be growing. As more and more services are shifted from the public sector—pensions, long-term health care and basic public services—there is enormous attraction in building a sector of the economy not driven by shareholder value. They also provide the opportunity to try and breathe life into the concept of a democratic business structure which could be one of the bulwarks against the unrestrained excesses of capitalism. As someone once said, it is worth saving the good things about the world today, so they can be a part of better tomorrow.

²³ Article in *UK Building Societies: Do They Have a Future?*, Centre for the Study of Financial Institutions, September 1995.

²⁴ Seth Armitage, *The Future of Mutual Life Offices*, Centre for Financial Markets Research, University of Edinburgh, January 1996.

Post-Marxism and the 'Four Sins' of Modernist Theorizing

In this paper, I want to tackle some of the underlying issues around 'post-Marxism' in contemporary social theory, using just one exemplar of this emerging framework, namely Michèle Barrett's book *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*.¹ The rationale for this limited focus is that the field of 'post-Marxism' in sociological, educational, feminist and cultural studies is now extensive, and it is consequently rather easy—but also somewhat unsatisfactory—to take a 'scatter-gun' approach to the central questions by citing many authors and gesturing at general tendencies. It seems to me better to anchor the discussion of those tendencies in a single text like Barrett's, partly because she is a widely respected commentator, and partly because the area she deals with—the theory of ideology—remains of particular importance to the self-image of radical critics.

One of my overarching themes is to suggest that post-Marxist critiques of historical materialism and class analysis tend to be couched as rejections of the

type of theory that Marxism is thought to represent, or as drastic temperings of its explanatory scope, rather than being outright dismissals of substantive Marxist propositions and analytic concerns. That is why the arguments for post-Marxism tend to hang more on pejorative characterizations of general conceptual effects/strategies such as Marxism's alleged 'reductionism', 'functionalism', 'essentialism', and 'universalism', than on the denial of particular historical materialist postulates, such as the systematically capitalist nature of the modern industrial order, which few post-Marxists seriously question.

The Major and Minor Keys of Post-Marxist Critique

The second component of my argument is to point out that although these discursive effects of 'modernist' theorizing—reductionism, essentialism, and so on—are nowadays treated in the post-Marxist literature almost as unpardonable gaffes or 'sins', they are seldom analyzed in a fine-grained way. Moreover, where they *are* more than gesturally featured, the evident continuing complexity of these explanatory issues tends to undercut the somewhat dismissive surface rhetoric of the critics. Thus, in Michèle Barrett's book a minor key of uncertainty and retrieval runs alongside the major key of renunciation. The dominant 'voice' in the book is one which appears unambiguously to reject Marxist theories of ideology. Thus, the author holds that 'in recent years, the whole paradigm within which the debate has occurred has been extensively and tellingly criticized', to the point where we must accept that 'the materialist (in practice economic reductionist) premises of Marxism are inadequate as a basis for thinking about political, cultural and social life in a late twentieth-century whose "determinations" are so different from those of mid nineteenth-century manufacturing capitalism.'² As a general theoretical problematic, Marxism is therefore held to be 'woefully inadequate'.³ As a political theory, it has gone beyond the 'breaking point' of 'viability' on the brink of which Gramsci had left it.⁴ Marxism's class-theoretical model of ideology, for its part, now 'does not work very well', having been 'problematized at a very fundamental level', indeed having 'collapsed' altogether.⁵ And its understanding of subjectivity in particular has been either non-existent, or 'lamentable'.⁶

Taking heart from the fact that the 'entire field of social theory is being recast in such a way as to take more seriously questions of culture and of subjectivity', Barrett prefers to understand ideology as a matter of deconstructing the 'politics of truth' rather than prolonging 'Marxism's obsession with the illusions of "the economics of untruth"'.⁷ Drawing on some now-familiar postmodernist emphases, she believes that this shift of focus necessitates highlighting the 'competing, and increasing, attractions of a newly elaborated theory of discourse'.⁸ One central component

¹ M. Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*, Cambridge 1991.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 139.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 57, 46.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. vii, 119.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, vii, 155.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

of this new discursive perspective would appear to be the Foucauldian strategy of treating all theories, identities and paradigms as regimes of truth, in which the concern to argue about the rights and wrongs of ideologies is replaced by one which latches on to 'the processes by which effects of truth are secured'.⁹ Another new dimension is the idea of a pluralized, socialized psychoanalysis; and a further angle is felt to be the need for an understanding of 'concatenations' of affective forces which possess 'a certain force and coherence' and yet lack 'a clear motive or logic'—such as 'world-cup fever'.¹⁰

Put this way, the critique of Marxism is uncompromising, and a very positive buzz is created around the possibility of a new alternative perspective. Nevertheless, Barrett—like many of the best post-Marxists—is not, as it happens, so fully committed to the 'major key' as she generally appears to be. And, to me, her hesitations signal a commendable awareness that, without some version of the four modernist methodological sins, the very notion of explanation in social theory simply cannot be sustained. So the third and final emphasis in this paper is to say that there is a deeper continuity of concern between classical Marxism and post-Marxism than many on either side are willing to admit. That continuity of concern is partly epistemological—what is to count as social knowledge?—and partly practical: what is such knowledge for? Ironically, of course, post-Marxists have some difficulty in openly admitting the continued relevance of these questions, because both epistemology and 'rationalist' visions of intellectual practice stand high on the list of bad old things that need to be quickly superseded.

Reductionism

Of the four sins, 'reductionism' is most frequently referred to by Barrett as being very damaging for Marxism. In addition to the general sentiments quoted above, Barrett makes a number of hard-hitting specific adjudications: for example, she expresses serious doubts as to whether the very idea of ideology can in any form survive the taint of 'economic determinism' with which Marxism irreversibly glossed the original concept;¹¹ Laclau's early work is cited as a decisive intervention against reductionism;¹² and Lukács and Korsch as well as Gramsci are damned with faint praise for valiantly trying to escape the reductionist problematic of Second International Marxism, but ultimately failing to accomplish that liberation.¹³ Clearly, Marxism is assumed by the author to engage routinely in reductionism—not even its best practitioners can escape it—and throughout the critical assessment of the historical-materialist tradition, reductionism is portrayed as fairly obviously a bad thing to be caught practising.

One important theoretical issue in assessing the status of the post-Marxist critique of reductionism lies in deciding whether Marxism is being treated as outdated, strictly speaking, or whether the faults that

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 118–19, 154.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–8, 51–4.

are now apparent were *always* there but were not always seen. In one of those set-piece statements, for example, it is implied that the world itself has *moved on*, and so Marxism, which may have been adequate for the analysis of an earlier social formation, is not adequate to the present one, which is characterized by very different 'determinations'.

In my view, the plausibility and simplicity of this 'historical' argument are misleading. For one thing, it is *incongruous* in terms of its post-Marxist provenance. After all, post-Marxism takes pretty much wholesale from postmodernism the idea that 'the social' is not to be conceived either in terms of possessing unproblematically 'real' empirical characteristics, or in terms of constituting a structured totality.¹⁴ Yet to say that Marxism was adequate to an earlier phase of capitalist modernity but is no longer adequate to the current social situation would seem to require a more robust amount of both empirical realism and theoretical totalization than current 'discursive' meta-theories are willing to accommodate. Luckily, Barrett gives herself space to manoeuvre by allowing that 'the issue of determination and social totality [is] more contentious than ever'.¹⁵ But this hint of abstention—a very proper one, in my view—belongs to the cautious minor key of the argument, not to the major key of renunciation.

Questions of theoretical consistency aside, the substantive case for the inadequacy and outdatedness of Marxism's reductionist ambience remain to be addressed, and the big points here are that class-explanatory propositions are less powerful nowadays, that there are now very significant non-class determinations, and that the whole cultural realm has become considerably more important. Yet, whilst it is indeed difficult for Marxists to 'evade' these points, it is crucial in the current context of debate to remind ourselves—if only as a matter of scholarship—that even in the epoch of 'nineteenth-century manufacturing capitalism', Marxists were frequently bombarded by this kind of critique. From its very inception, the 'metaphysical' character of Marxian economics was under sustained attack; the hallmark of the newly founded tradition of academic sociology in the later nineteenth century was its concern to offer strongly pluralistic rejoinders to Marxism in the analysis of both social stratification and the theory of social development; and opposition to the 'historicism' and 'a priori-ism' of Marxist dialectical methodology has likewise been part of the staple diet of liberal philosophers. And through the decades, the continuity of concern about reductionism is particularly striking.¹⁶

Moreover, when we reflect seriously on the richness, pace and complexity

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 46

¹⁶ Every decade since Marx's death has witnessed serious efforts either to thrust or parry on the questions of determinism and reductionism. From about the mid-1960s, there are too many texts on this matter to realistically list; key earlier texts include G. Simmel, *The Problems of the Philosophy of History* [1892], New York 1977; E. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* [1897], London 1907; L. Boudin, *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx*, Chicago 1907; B. Russell, *The Theory and Practice of Bolshevism*, London 1920; S. Hook, *From Hegel to Marx*, New York 1926; G. D. H. Cole, *What Marx Really Means*, New York 1934; M. Eastman, *Marxism: Is it a Science?*, New York 1940; I. Berlin, *Karl Marx*, Oxford 1948; H. B. Acton, *The Illusion of the Epoch*, London 1955; K. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London 1961.

of cultural life in nineteenth-century Europe—think of any of the great novels of that epoch, for example—it is both inaccurate and patronizing to claim that culture should be seen as a significantly more important ‘determination’ on social life today than it was way back in those simple ‘economistic’ days. At the very least this near-dogma of post-Marxism merits the kind of full-scale comparative study that, to my knowledge, has not yet been undertaken.

Contrary to first impressions, then, the idea that social life has changed so dramatically in recent decades as to leave Marxism looking analytically impoverished when once it looked explanatorily rich, turns out to be by no means ‘obvious’ or automatically convincing. Indeed, it would seem both more persuasive as well as more congruous with the ‘revelatory’ rhetoric of post-Marxism to maintain that there have *always* been more ‘determinations’, that culture has *always* been more significant, than Marxism has ever allowed for. In that sense, whilst it may be right to say that ‘in recent years, the whole [Marxist] paradigm... has been extensively and tellingly criticized’,¹⁷ it is quite wrong to imply that such critique is very new, since scores of ‘bourgeois’ thinkers have been saying similar sorts of things all along.

With the ‘historical’ argument unresolved, the brunt of the post-Marxist critique of reductionism falls along the methodological, or meta-theoretical dimension strictly speaking. In this regard, it is Marxism’s apparent aspiration either to analytical simplicity or to analytical completeness that are found to be most problematical. Thus, few post-Marxists would dispute that socio-economic class is an important determinant of cultural and socio-political life, and in fact how they tend to think about class is profoundly marked by the specific concepts of Marxist theory; what they object to is rather Marxism’s apparently exclusive and reductive focus on class.

In fact, what exactly constitutes a ‘reductionist’ explanatory programme, and whether this is a ‘good’ or a ‘bad’ thing is the subject of protracted and complex debate in the meta-theory of the natural and social sciences.¹⁸ Barrett herself—in the minor key—shows her awareness of that complexity when she urges that general questions of the meaning of determinism and materialism might usefully be ‘shelved’ so that we can focus on the specific substantive deficits of class reductionism.¹⁹ But this shelving is not easy to do, given the initial assumption that what is wrong with Marxism’s focus on class is precisely its methodological reductionism rather than its belief that class is important—which post-Marxists tend not to dispute.

Eliminative and Loose Reductionism

What, then, is the problem with reductionism as an explanatory strategy? Here we must bear in mind that in the natural sciences the

¹⁷ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, p. 16

¹⁸ See, for instance, A. Peacocke, ed., *Reductionism in Academic Disciplines*, Guildford 1985, and D. Charles and K. Lennon, eds, *Reduction, Explanation and Realism*, Oxford 1992.

¹⁹ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, p. 159

explanatory reduction of the terms of a higher level of organization (for instance, solid everyday objects like tables) to the entities and processes of lower levels of organization (for instance, atoms, sub-atomic particles, quarks, and so on 'downwards') has been widely regarded as the very paradigm of successful enquiry. So much so that it is hard to identify any staunchly anti-scientistic critics who say that *all* reductionism is illegitimate. The typical pattern of 'resistance' has not been to deny the value of reductionism in its place, but instead to say that reductionism is an inappropriate strategy for the social sciences. More recently, it has also come to be widely accepted that paradigmatic explanation in a very great deal of natural scientific research also turns out to be something other than reductionism in any classic 'physicalist' sense.

Indeed, there is considerable philosophical debate about what reductionism even in the 'classic' sense entails. 'Eliminative' reductionism, which is one way of putting it, is the idea that we can specify completely everything of significance in one domain in terms of the objects and processes of another domain. Thus, some 'behaviourists' or 'physicalists' have been portrayed as asserting that mental processes, for example, can be wholly reduced to statements about brain activity without any great loss. The idea is that almost by definition, the terms of the lower level both account for *and* supersede those of the more complex level—like saying that there is nothing more to be said about 'water' that is not more exactly contained in the definition of water as H_2O .

It would be getting into very deep water to pursue this debate here, but what is interesting for our purposes is to note that even the hardest sorts of reductionism, in the hardest sorts of areas, are increasingly seen as contestable. But, just as importantly, just yet no one is prepared to say that reductionism is therefore to be seen as a wholly illegitimate research strategy. Far from it: some regulative notion of explaining the events of one domain in terms of those of another remains close to the heart of what we mean by 'explanation' itself. You could even say that with the greater questioning of what constitutes strict reductionism, 'loose' reductionism, paradoxically, becomes for its part more respectable, and its greater vagueness some kind of strength.

Against this backdrop, it seems clear that Marxist 'reductionism' could not possibly fit an 'eliminative' model. In the theory of ideology, it would be quite absurd to assume that, for Marxists, you could do away altogether with the terminology and referents of such phenomena as, for example, the New Right agenda for social transformation, and replace them wholesale with the terminology of ruling-class interests. Not even in the most vulgar treatment of such an issue is 'eliminative' reductionism of this kind in play. Rather the typical proposition is that New Right ideology is in some broad causal sense closely connected to economic structures and capitalist class interests.

Is it legitimate to call a broad, causal sense of connection of that kind reductionism? Some would argue that to move from strict reductionism to broader notions like supervenience, dependence, constraint, or physical/material prerequisites, is precisely to move *out* of the terrain of

reductionism altogether.²⁰ Others would argue to the contrary that to posit weak but still 'hierarchical' connections of dependence/derivation between two domains is to continue to engage in a rather absurd metaphysical wild goose chase. This is because full reduction continues to be taken as a regulative ideal in circumstances where it cannot possibly be achieved.²¹

This framing of 'weak' reductionism is surely the appropriate one for tackling the problem of Marxist reductionism. Indeed, even in some of the older post-Marxist and liberal critical texts,²² it was Marxism's potential fatalistic determinism that was found to be unacceptable, not its general sense of the causal determination of cultural and social life by economic structures, which was often allowed to be perfectly acceptable. So the issue of weak reductionism can be resolved in a number of different ways. If you see weak reduction primarily as an *escape* from strict reductionism, then Marxism is not reductionist after all. In an important book which covers many of these issues insightfully, Wright, Levine and Sober characterize the whole history of 'neo-Marxism' as, precisely, *anti*-reductionism, because they believe that Marxism is intrinsically opposed to the 'physicalist' reductionist equivalent in the social sciences, namely methodological individualism.²³

Recommending Weak Reductionism

A different take on the same sort of position—and the one I personally favour—is to say that *some* kind of weak reductionism is definitely there in Marxism as a guiding principle, but reductionism in the appropriate (weak) sense turns out to be not such a 'bad' thing after all, and it certainly does not imply any wholesale devaluation of the level of 'explained' phenomena. Thus, to say that the emergence of New Right ideology can only be causally explained by reference to the conditions and interests of class formations is certainly *not* to imply that the specifically ideological effects of the higher level of organization are of no intrinsic interest. On the contrary, it is just because discourses of, for example, national belonging, popular capitalism and traditional family life are so extremely interesting and powerful that we seek to understand where they came from, what sustains them and how they can be in some sense structurally 'explained'. With that in mind, no one needs to apologize for proposing that class interests and economic constraints and tendencies be considered as central to the causal nexus that produces neo-liberal ideologies.

Against this pair of options, Barrett's line would seem to be that Marxist notions of a structural ground of causal properties, if not strongly reductionist in the 'eliminative' sense, is still strong enough 'in principle' to imply the worthlessness of the explained terrain. Such

²⁰ For instance A. Garfinkel, *Forms of Explanation*, New York 1981.

²¹ For instance J. Dupre, *The Disorder of Things*, Cambridge, Mass. 1993, especially part 2.

²² For an example of a post-Marxist text, see G.D.H. Cole, *The Meaning of Marxism*, London 1948, p. 29, for a liberal view, see K. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 2: *Hegel and Marx*, London 1962, p. 107.

²³ E.O. Wright, A. Levine and E. Sober, *Reconstructing Marxism*, London 1992, pp. 116–20.

oversimplification, she might conclude, does merit both the technical term reductionism and the bad connotations that usually go along with it. I am not sure that this debate about reductionism can be resolved properly, and certainly not in this illustrative context. But it does seem to me that, without a good deal more logical analysis and consideration of actual examples taken from Marxist studies of ideological formations, Barrett's smearing of Marxism with the brush of 'reductionism' remains much less convincing than the dismissive tone implies. Relatedly, the post-Marxist suggestion—not usually argued through as such, but often playing a crucial rhetorical role in the 'demolition job' on modernist motifs—that critical social theory can do *without* any kind of reductionist impulse, whilst it is undoubtedly interesting, is highly problematic as well as chronically undeveloped.

One last sense of 'class reductionism' in Barrett's commentary is worth questioning. This is where she maintains that the deficit in Marxism comes not only through its generalized economism, but through its assumption that specific ideologies need to be seen as 'belonging' to specific classes.²⁴ There are two points to make against this surprisingly 'vulgar' rendering of Marxist ideas. First of all, the criticism is grossly unfair. Marx certainly said that the dominant ideas of an epoch were the ideas of the ruling class, but it surely does not follow from this—and runs directly against Marx's best practice—that all ideologies can be allocated, by virtue of their content alone, into ruling-class ideas and subordinate-class ideas. If vulgar Marxists have assumed this—and once again we have here a central claim for which Barrett's text does not give serious evidence—then of course, they should be subjected to criticism. But the vulgar view should not be assumed to be the considered Marxist view.

The second point is to note that, even if the vulgar view was fairly attributed by Barrett to Marxism tout court, it would not follow that ideological practices are free-floating in any autonomous sense. Not just Marxism, but any strenuous sociology of belief, searches for clues in the structural characteristics of a social formation which might help us fully explain the apparent independent power of ideology.

One of the effects of Barrett's arguments on these issues is to try definitively to separate out and rank Marx and Foucault. In questioning the basis of this case, and in spite of some obvious differences between these two 'greats', I would also want to urge us to consider the significant overlaps between them. In this spirit, it is not too hard to portray Marx's proposition that the dominant ideas of an epoch are those of the dominant class as establishing, before its time, a quasi-Foucauldian research agenda. Do not ask, Marx seems to be urging, about the 'truth' or virtue or necessary 'belongingness' of the sets of dominant ideas that circulate in society; rather ask about how these ideas facilitate relations of class power, investigate how they come to be accepted as true, see how they rationalize the strategies of groups and institutions, and show how they can lead to the establishment of particular mechanisms of (capitalist) social control.

²⁴ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, p. 56.

To see further the compatibility of Foucault and Marx, we need only reflect upon the recent fundamental shift in the 'regime of truth' that governs academic production in the 'Western' world. The pervasive move to audit, quality management, accountability, customer service, performance indicators, appraisal, aims and objectives, targets, mission statements and the like has produced an extraordinarily powerful new discourse. And like most profound regimes of truth, it is almost impossible to hold on to a stance which is altogether 'outside' that new frame of reference. Thus, radical academics have quickly become caught up in the process whereby both older elitist values and fresher alternative pedagogies can be validated only on condition that some version or other of the new managerialist vocabulary gets legitimated and reproduced. After all, who amongst that hard-working, research-conscious but also student-conscious collectivity would *deny* that the apparatuses of 'reflexive practice' in education—staff development, self-, mentor- and peer-consultation systems, and so forth—are often useful, perhaps even necessary?

But does the relative autonomy of these systems of ideas, these normative struggles, these 'technologies', mechanisms and effects of power in the Foucauldian sense serve to disconnect such ideological forms from the wider class formations and economic restructurings which sustain them? No. Are they then reducible in any *strict* sense to the interests, entities, and processes of that lower level of complexity? No.

Functionalism

Reductionism is closely connected to the other three main 'sins' of modernist explanation—namely, functionalism, essentialism, and universalism. Michèle Barrett for her part mentions the problem of functionalism less often than the problem of reductionism, and it is possible that for all practical purposes she is treating them as equivalent. She certainly assumes that functionalism is not good explanatory practice. Thus Barrett repeats the standard criticism of Althusser's 'ISA essay'—that it is functionalist;²⁵ she takes fellow post-Marxists Laclau and Mouffe to task for indulging in a functionalist account of the development of the welfare state;²⁶ and she criticizes Marxism's handling of ideology in terms of its 'exclusive and functional connection to social class'.²⁷

One immediate point to make here is that these two conceptual effects are not in fact equivalent or coterminous. For example, the logic of reductionism involves accounting for some composite whole in terms of its (more basic) *parts*, whereas functionalism explains the significance of phenomena by conceiving them as elements or parts of a more complex structured *whole*. 'Expansion' rather than reduction is therefore the appropriate trope. So, although Marxism tends to get routinely characterized as both functionalist *and* reductionist, these explanatory modes do have importantly different emphases that are worth dwelling on.

²⁵ L. Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)', in his *Essays on Ideology*, Verso, London 1984; Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, p. 97.

²⁶ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, p. 75

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 157

Following the pattern of the reductionism discussion, we can go on to ask: does Marxism involve functional explanation, and is that such a bad thing anyway? It seems undeniable that Marxism does involve functional explanation. No recognizably Marxist account of the growth and significance of education or the welfare state, for example, could fail to situate the phenomena to be explained—acts of governments, disciplinary strategies, pedagogic ideologies, categories of deserving welfare claimants, and so on—without reference to the reproduction of labour markets and the distribution of resources and employment prospects characteristic of (particular phases of) the capitalist mode of production. That wider reference point contextualises and in some sense explains the emergence, persistence or rationale of the more concrete practices or institutional arrangements.

There are several dimensions of this functionalist ambience of Marxism that have proved worrying, both to critics and to many Marxists. One of them concerns the way in which, in 'orthodox' historical materialism, the productive forces of a society at a given time are theorized as either facilitated or fettered by the predominant relations of production. In spite of some superb conceptual discussions which appear to require Marxism to uphold some kind of productive-forces functionalism,²⁸ this sophisticated 'technological determinism' still appears to many 'Western' Marxists to be neither true to Marx nor independently attractive. Whatever the pros and cons of that argument, I would argue that it is the 'technologism', rather than the functionalism per se, that is problematic in orthodox historical materialism, since many who uphold the primacy of the *relations* of production within the forces-relations schema still commit themselves to large-scale functional generalizations in terms of the way in which particular political or ideological phenomena comply with the 'needs' or 'logic' or 'interests' of capital, conceived in the preferred way as a functioning ensemble of social (class) relations.

Taking this further, some critics of Marxism have argued that *all* its variants are dubiously functionalist, because of their baseline reference to the objective 'needs' of the capitalist system.²⁹ Typically, it is pointed out that only *people*—and not systems—have needs. Marxism is thus rejected on the grounds of its overwhelming functionalist anthropomorphism. Now whilst I too cringe somewhat whenever talk arises about how, for instance, education reforms come into play to 'meet the needs of capital', I do not think that the 'anthropomorphism' argument is altogether convincing. If complex systems evolve as a way of meeting various basic human needs—as they surely do—then it is not inappropriate to speak of the resulting systems themselves as having needs. Though heavily mediated by immediate practicalities and logistical exigencies, social systems of any sort must in the end be counted as 'teleological' in a key sense: they derive from, or are influenced by, human purposes and requirements. Transport systems, computer networks, economic models—these 'instrumental' systems are obviously designed to meet needs,

²⁸ For instance G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History. A Defence*, Oxford 1978, P. van Parijs, *Evolutionary Explanation in the Social Sciences*, London 1981.

²⁹ For instance A. Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, vol. 1, London 1981.

and themselves will have certain 'needs' if they are to function effectively. To speak of social or economic systems more generally as having needs is perhaps more debatable, but systematic features of all societies, including stratification principles, residential patterns, gender divisions, socio-economic resources and rewards are in some central sense adaptive and advantaging mechanisms—they function and change in relation to the specific and general needs of their human populations. The difficulty is, of course, that it is often hard to specify in anything other than a very general sense *which* needs are being served by which items in the state of the system; and it is then all too easy to move from the hypothesis that some reform or discourse *might, in part* serve some general functional rationale to the conviction that it successfully does meet that need, and that nothing much more of interest needs to be said about the phenomenon in question. Looking *ex post facto* for functional fits³⁰—what Sartre once referred to as the basis of 'lazy Marxism'—is definitely a flawed and unacceptable procedure. But equally, it is a rather lazy kind of post-Marxism which assumes that functional explanation is always either ungrounded or all-purpose.

Even if that is our inclination, we need to be aware that Marxism is by no means particularly and specially functionalist in the 'bad' sense. Discussions around the welfare state, for example, currently feature feminist, Green, and 'ethnacist' challenges to Marxist models, and badly functionalist versions of each are relatively easy to find. The proposal that the welfare state is premised upon, and sustains, the planet-destroying economics of industrial growth, for example, amounts to a kind of Green functionalism. The idea that the family wage norm—so central to modern welfare provision—serves to reinforce the ideology and practice of the male breadwinner, out there in the public sphere, whilst women are reduced to domestic labour or part-time pin money, amounts to feminist functionalism, where patriarchy is the overall system conceived as having a distinct and overriding logic, and consequent reproductive needs. Of course, there are more subtle efforts to combine the various class, race, gender and ecological insights. But where these efforts do not collapse into an 'additive' collection of separatist logics, they combine into yet another picture of a complex structured whole, the reproductive logic of which will still—albeit subtly—be of a basically functionalist tenor.

The Revival of Functionalism

Another of the main problems with functionalist analysis is its residual association with the ideological inclinations of mid-century American sociology. In that paradigm, the theoretical concern to envisage the social totality as a system of interrelated sub-systems, its workings lubricated by consensual trust and goal-directed motivation amongst citizens, was closely bound up with the normative belief that the current liberal capitalist social system 'functioned' pretty well in fulfilling most people's needs. The normative dimension of American functionalism deserved much of the excoriating critique that it provoked, and I cer-

³⁰ W.G. Runciman, *A Treatise on Social Theory*, Vol. 1, *The Methodology of Social Theory*, Cambridge 1983, p. 212.

tainly do not seek to rehabilitate it, yet it seems naive to think that social theory can ever quite escape some normative sense of healthy functioning, even if our theory is not excessively functionalist in the bad sense.³¹ In any case, I think if we look back carefully over the heyday and subsequent overthrow of sociological functionalism, it seems that Robert Merton decisively scaled down both the ambition of Parsonian grand theory, and its aura of capitalistic apologetics. In a still underrated analysis, underrated by leftist critics at least,³² Merton reconceived the Parsonian functional prerequisites as postulates to be tested rather than as assumed benchmarks for enquiry; he showed that a broadly functionalist outlook not only had nothing to fear from change but that it was required to embrace an understanding of change; and he subtly distinguished different sorts of 'functionality', notably latent and manifest functions. Rereading that text, I cannot find anything utterly incompatible with Marxist—or feminist, or Green—analytics, and this view is also arrived at from a very different approach by one of the leading figures of 'neo-functionalism', which is, as a result, again enjoying some influence in sociology.³³ Looking back, excessive leftist and feminist criticism of any type of functionalism now seems a little embarrassing.

Perhaps functionalism can be better rehabilitated by suggesting that the original label for the Parsons school—'structural-functionalism'—is in fact very appropriate for the theoretical level we are investigating here. Put another way, if 'functionalism' falls, it is hard to see how 'structuralism' can survive. And if some kind of structuralism is ruled out, then large-scale social theory of any type looks to be illegitimate. Functional explanation, then, can be usefully regarded as equivalent to structural explanation. This is indeed the gist of some of the best recent discussions of the topic, in which a pluralistic concern not to privilege micro-causal explanation leads to the idea that there is perhaps no single overriding goal of theoretical analysis. According to the positivist model, functional explanation must be tied closely to an account of specific selection mechanisms which secure an empirical functional connection. Whether 'realists'—and Marxists usually are realists—must also be committed to the priority of causal explanation is another difficult, open question.³⁴ But it is certainly time to oppose the view that 'fine-grained' explanation is always necessarily better than coarse-grained inquiry,³⁵ and time also to adopt a meta-stance which accepts that 'explanation finds its own level'.³⁶

What I take this to mean is that all significantly different levels of ontic organization have their relatively autonomous logic of 'functioning', and so we should not apologize too much if, as in the case of the properties of

³¹ G. Macdonald argues this point for the case of evolutionary biology. See 'Reduction and Evolutionary Biology', in Charles and Lennon, *Reduction, Explanation and Realism*, p. 92.

³² R. Merton, 'Manifest and Latent Functions', in his *Social Theory and Social Structure*, third edition, New York 1968.

³³ See J.C. Alexander, 'Introduction' to Alexander, ed., *Neofunctionalism*, Newbury Park 1985.

³⁴ See D. Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*, Boulder, Co. 1991, R.W. Miller, *Fact and Method*, Princeton 1987.

³⁵ E. Jackson and P. Pettit, 'Structural Explanation in Social Theory', in Charles and Lennon, *Reduction, Explanation and Realism*, p. 31.

³⁶ Garfinkel, *Forms of Explanation*, p. 59.

social wholes, that functional logic must inevitably remain to an extent rather vague, provisional and speculative. Ultimately, functionalist explanation is not a failed request for causal information; it is rather a different way of 'making sense' of a phenomenon's coming-to-be. Functional explanation posits a certain kind of 'why' question of its subject matter: Why does the welfare state appear to have run its course in traditional Keynesian terms? Why have male industrial workers been inhospitable to women entering the labour market as equals? Why has there been a revival of ethnic nationalist aspirations in a globalized, (post-)modern world? Clearly, we cannot progress much in these sorts of enquiries without causal elaboration of how things came to be as they are. But it does seem that arguments about the overall significance and persistence or disappearance of social institutions do require a functionalist frame of mind rather than (only) a 'mechanical' one. The two related styles of reasoning do not conceptually map on to one another precisely. Indeed, given its ritualistic anti-positivism and commitment to seeing theories as *imaginings* rather than *representations*, post-Marxism might have been expected to take fairly kindly to functionalist story-lines. They provide a kind of 'making sense' that is one step removed from the scientific obsession with demonstrability. But once again, regrettably, what we tend to find is an impatient and dismissive mode of argumentation that simply rules out any finer points of interest in this matter.

Essentialism

Essentialism is a necessary concomitant of functional explanation. It is also indispensable to realist thinking about complex entities and processes. Without some coherent notion of what is central—of the essence—to the workings of the capitalist mode of production, or to human physiology, or to the structure of DNA, or to schizophrenia, explanation in these areas, at least as traditionally conceived, simply breaks down. Essentialism is the view that we can in principle characterize things and structures as having two sets of characteristics. On the one hand, there are those aspects without which that thing or structure would literally be unrecognizable as that type of thing/structure. In netball, you simply have to have nets, balls, players and rules which prohibit kicking the ball—this is of the essence in netball, otherwise it might better be regarded as a variety of Aussie Rules. On the other hand, there are aspects which are strictly speaking inessential to the phenomenon in question. In this example, team colours perhaps, or even a change of rules in terms of when you are compelled to pass the ball.

In *The Politics of Truth*, Barrett commends the anti-essentialism (read also anti-reductionism) of Laclau and Mouffe, and she presents the strengths of Foucault's analysis of power under the aegis of the more general 'critique of "essentialism" in social theory' today.³⁷ In asking about the 'how' of power, rather than the 'why' or 'who', she maintains that Foucault bypasses various traditional essentialist traps. Indeed, Barrett's anti-essentialism appears to go further than that of her allies, since Laclau and Mouffe are said to present a foundationalist account of 'a social world whose essential characteristic is the infinite play of

³⁷ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, pp 77, 136.

differences'.³⁸ As for Foucault, his own radical insistence on the contingent and discursive nature of subjective identification is to be seen in the end as a characteristic philosophical trick, whereby a new depersonalized and quasi-universal assumption of 'abstract correctness' has the effect of failing to anti-essentialize the politics of knowledge.³⁹ Foucault's own Eurocentrism and masculinism, for example, 'disappear' from the fabric of the discourse which promised to highlight contingent and strategic claims to truth.

Are Marxists essentialists? And, in spite of what Barrett says, is being essentialist defensible? In both cases, the answer seems to me once again to be a qualified 'yes'. Marxists must be committed to the notion of a 'logic of motion' of the capitalist mode of production in a strong sense, even if that logic includes 'contradictory' processes. Similarly, historical materialism reveals an essentialist approach when it construes different epochs of human society in terms of different, distinctive logics of surplus extraction and socio-political life. The essential features of feudalism, it is argued, are different from the essential features of capitalism—and other modes of production. Essentialism here need not amount to reductionism or 'expressivism' in concrete social analysis: different aspects of several modes of production may be present in any social formation; the 'essence' of a mode of production could be conceived as having indeterminate outcomes on important aspects of social and cultural life, and so on. In other words, just as there are crude and less crude 'functionalisms' and 'reductionisms', so there might be simple and complex essentialisms. The case for essentialist Marxism has been put perhaps most dramatically in this way: Marxism does not just see an 'analogy' between society and living organisms, thus encouraging an essentialist approach to social 'cells', functions and elements; Marxism theorizes society *literally* as a complex body, having an essential logic of growth.⁴⁰

This kind of essentialism strikes me as a little extravagant, and I would prefer, along with various 'broad' realists, to talk of—variously fulfilled—potentials, capacities and tendencies. But note that this is only a qualification of essentialism, not a refutation, because if we are in any way committed to 'structural' styles of explanation, then we are compelled at some point to decide, in principle at any rate, which tendencies in a complex process lie at the heart of that process and which do not. Any theory which has interesting and bold things to say about social structure and social change must be essentialist; it will identify central concepts to 'pick out' purported key mechanisms and forces within a complex whole. Once again, if Marxism falls by the sword of anti-essentialism, then so do strong forms of feminist theorizing, Green theorizing and so on. Of course, 'combined' explanatory strategies are legitimate and perhaps promising, but it is clear from contemporary debates that no one is terribly happy about a simple 'additive' theorization of the various essential dimensions of social structure. The dimensions are usually

³⁸ Ibid, p. 78

³⁹ Ibid, p. 151

⁴⁰ Strong essentialism in this vein is argued for in S. Meikle, *Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx*, London 1985

thought to be in need of coherent interweaving and restatement as a new big picture—in effect, as a new complex essentialism.

Can Contingency be Theorized?

The partial rehabilitation of essentialism as a common and necessary feature of 'depth' explanation is prompted also by the difficulty of conceiving a credible alternative to essentialist modes of understanding. Of course, it is often said that social theory must gear itself up to accepting as a basic premise the radical contingency of social life, its discontinuity, and its specificity,⁴¹ but I am still not sure what this could really mean in any literal sense. How can one *theorize* contingency—does not the very idea amount to explanatory capitulation in the face of happenstance? Barrett cites favourably Paul Hirst's proposal that after Marxism social relations must be conceived as aggregations of institutions, forms of organization, practices and agents which do not answer to any single causal principle or logic of consistency.⁴² But this interesting formula does not quite face up to what one does when one nevertheless becomes convinced that these aggregations are more than chance correlations, nor does it rule out the possibility that they might be something more. Foucault is also quoted in this context, appearing to offer a new logic of contingency in his idea that causality and necessity be abandoned and replaced by 'a polymorphous cluster of correlations'.⁴³ Once again, though, why bother thinking of clusterings and correlations, if not to scout out some deeper—essential?—pattern or logic. What explanatory value could possibly emerge from the notion that we must, as critical social scientists, merely 'note' and describe correlations, if that is all they are—happenstance correlations? To me there is no satisfactory answer to this kind of query in Barrett, Foucault or Hirst. Since for me the genius and challenge of Foucault lies in his attempt to stay right away from 'theory'—thus making something of a mockery of many followers who try to apply 'Foucauldian theory'—the problem of explanation is not something that worries him too much, at least on the surface. But in Barrett's case the matter is rather different, since it is not clear that she is comfortable with giving contingency a marked metaphysical priority over necessity, nor comfortable with the (contradictory) notion of contingent theorizing. That, though, is the tough call of anti-essentialism, which Barrett readily sees at work in the manoeuvrings of Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe. Rather than trying (and failing) to produce a 'purer' anti-essentialism, the more plausible conclusion would be to accept that some degree of essentialism is simply unavoidable. The disputes are usually over *which* essences we should accept as important, not *whether* essences can be dispensed with.

What of the oft-heard idea that essentialism is an 'absolutist' way of conceiving human beings, groups and societies? Does not the specification of an essential 'core' in the identities of people and systems constitute a

⁴¹ See A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge 1984; R.M. Unger, *Social Theory: Its Situation and its Task*, Cambridge 1987; N. Fraser and L. Nicholson, 'Social Criticism Without Philosophy: An Encounter Between Feminism and Postmodernism', in L. Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism*, London 1990.

⁴² Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, p. 65.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 130.

massive suppression of the differences that appear to be at the heart of modern pluralist aspirations? This is a taxing question, and once again, it is no part of my argument to suggest that essentialists have nothing to worry about in that regard. Fortunately, though, an important paper by Martha Nussbaum offers a substantial way beyond polarized debate on this issue.⁴⁴

Nussbaum notes with alarm that at gatherings of feminists, development specialists and others, the notion of essentialism today tends to get sneeringly dismissed as though its faults were obvious and as though an alternative were readily available. Since Nussbaum believes neither of these things, she reconstructs a defensible essentialist overview for contemporary morality and politics. Her gambit is to say that hers is not an 'absolute' notion of essential human functioning and flourishing. It is not some set of values floating entirely free from the specific concerns of humans located in time and place. Nevertheless, she argues, we can reasonably look over human history and come up with a shared understanding of various things and capacities that, were they lacking in a life, we would very likely consider it not to be a proper human life at all. These then serve as the essential core of a proper life, and thus serve as the basis for a common radical humanist politics. Predictably, Nussbaum includes in this list of essential features some apparently very basic things such as mortality, the need for food, drink, shelter, sexual desire, and freedom of movement, but she powerfully reminds us that in our 'advanced' society these needs are still hugely, tellingly unmet in many places. On top of that, she describes our cognitive capabilities, our capacity for pleasure and pain, our affiliation with others, our relatedness to nature, our humour and play. Add to that considerations of autonomy, cooperation and harmony of achievements, and what first looked like a crude list slowly takes on the form of an indispensable and substantial conception of the human individual.

Nussbaum goes on to say that it is precisely because this conception of humanity is an essentialist one—that is, inescapable but very 'basic'—that the charge of absolutism and insensitivity to difference is dangerous and mistaken: 'it allows in its very design for the possibility of multiple specifications of each of the components'.⁴⁵ Difference, relativity, variation—but not relativism, since the core conception not only specifies a cross-cultural minimum, but seems to gain a remarkable degree of actual agreement across cultures, in the present at any rate.⁴⁶

In dwelling on this feminist, humanist argument of Nussbaum—which is rather supportive of Marx—I have broken with my declared intention of sticking to Barrett's text alone. But the reason for this deviation is simple: Barrett herself calls for a 'decisive reopening' of the question of humanism and anti-humanism at the end of *The Politics of Truth*.⁴⁷ Now, whilst she is certainly right to feel that structuralist Marxism has given humanism an undeservedly bad press, it is hard to see how Barrett can

⁴⁴ M. Nussbaum, 'Human Functioning as Social Justice' In Defence of Aristotelian Essentialism', *Political Theory*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1992), pp. 202–46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁴⁷ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, p. 164.

get away with a renewed humanism under the banner of post-structuralism, postmodernism and post-Marxism. This is because, as the interlude with Nussbaum amply demonstrates, a powerful humanist impulse *requires* and does not *dispose with* essentialism and universalism, as most 'post-' polemicists are urging. In this context, it is interesting to note that there are other feminists who are more explicit than Barrett about adopting a more accommodating approach to essentialism than has been typical of late, understanding that without some kind of essentialism it is hard to see how one can be a feminist in any distinctive sense.⁴⁸ In that vein, they speak of the necessity of occupying essentialism 'strategically'. This greater awareness of the trickiness of this issue, and the inadequacy of sweeping dismissal, is certainly heartening. However, one of the points of my discussion is that it is hard to see how something like essentialism, with its in-built commitment to general principles, can actually be held 'strategically'. For better or worse, essentialism appears to demand fully the courage of one's convictions.

Universalism

The charge of 'universalism' against a theory refers to a cluster of possibilities. One possibility is its purported applicability to *any* society, regardless of time and place. This is sometimes referred to as the 'trans-historical' aspirations of general social reflection, and historical materialism is sometimes taken to be a classic universalist theory in that sense. A slightly different construal is that universalism indicates a theory's claim to be 'universally' true—not necessarily true for all societies but true, nevertheless *unconditionally*, that is, regardless of the position and interests of the knowing subject. Michèle Barrett trades upon both of these meanings in her text. She refers to universalism being one of the chief 'weaknesses' of Marxism itself, but also speaks of the 'fading charms of universal discourses' more generally.⁴⁹ In a more sustained way, Barrett draws attention to the problematic nature of theorizing ideology in an *epistemological* way, that is to say, in a way which implies that the analysis of ideology presumes to aspire to a more truthful, universal understanding (science) by contrast with the partial, distorted material (ideology) that is the subject matter of the analysis. Thus, she considers the main meta-theoretical orientation of Marxism, philosophical realism, to be epistemologically dubious, since it is implied that objectivist theorists have access to how reality 'really is', by comparison with the distortion of reality that occurs within ideological constructions.

In this line, Barrett argues that the concept of ideology, as indelibly stamped by classical Marxism, is 'undeniably epistemological', with definite pejorative overtones.⁵⁰ Marx is assumed to be a realist, and realism is something that is decisively rejected by Foucault and that rejection stands as one of Foucault's perceived advantages over 'modernist' alternatives.⁵¹ Marx was not, Barrett avers, a believer in the prevalence of 'false

⁴⁸ See D. Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, London 1989; G.C. Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, London 1993.

⁴⁹ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, pp vii, 163

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p 9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 138.

consciousness' as such, but he wrote persistently, obsessively even, of the distortions and illusions of ideology.⁵² In this way, Marx bought into scientism and universalism in a big way, and for that he must now be sharply criticized.

Once again, we can initially agree with Barrett that Marxism is marked as a theoretical project by distinctly epistemological—and, in that sense, universalist—tendencies. Barrett notes the existence of a sub-strand of Marxism which attempts to treat the understanding of ideology in an epistemically neutral way, yet she seems right to characterize Marxism overall as scientistic in its approach to ideology analysis.⁵³ What, then, of universalism as an explanatory sin in either of the two senses outlined?

First, it has always struck me that the interpretation of universalism as being 'transhistorical' is misleading. After all, even if we adopt a theory which 'covers' the whole of human society, this is still a *historical* theory in some major way—it applies to the time span of social systems and their specific conditions of existence. Now, even if Marx was not committed to a strongly universalist vision of historical materialism, his ideas do seem to gesture at an evolutionary level of abstraction. This may be a dangerous level to inhabit, of course, but it simply cannot be ruled out as illegitimate on an a priori basis, as some defenders of a much more particularist style of historical materialism often assert.⁵⁴

And if Marx did not hold to a universal ('transhistorical') *theory* of human history, his more specific theories are certainly awash with clusters of universal concepts—productive forces, relations of production, ideology, surplus extraction and so on. Indeed, on reflection, it is clear that just about every social theory must use universal concepts in this sense—structure and agency, regimes of truth, front faces and back faces, culture, ideology, gender, ethnicity. Here, universality or the striving for generality is the very condition of meaning: all language has a necessarily universal element in this sense.

We must also ask, what would a non-universalist theory look like? Wary of the sin of universalism, post-Marxist and post-feminist writers often talk of the need to keep our theories rooted in the 'particular', the 'specific' and the 'local'. Despite the popularity of this kind of assertion, it seems to me to lead nowhere. Marx's own theory of capitalism and class relations, for example, was pretty much 'rooted' in his time and place—and he gets blamed for that too. More importantly, though, the call for particularism is incoherent. We can never actually know when any particular is particular enough, and in any case the smallest significant particulars you can think of—groups, selves, experiences, thoughts, words, events, actions—are themselves inevitably *abstractions* from countless further particulars. Barrett for her part recognizes this problem openly—at least in the minor key—by asking how we might be able to 'dampen down the universalistic pretensions of theories without making a

⁵² Ibid., pp. 5–6, 155.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 7–8. For an instance of this strand, see J. McCarney, *The Real World of Ideology*, Brighton 1980.

⁵⁴ See D. Sayer, *The Violence of Abstraction*, Oxford 1987.

complete surrender to particularism'.⁵⁵ This is an important and testing question for sure, but we could make a start on it by being more discriminating about the imaginative and scientific capacities that many universalizing discourses embody; and by trying to find even one single example of an interesting theory which does not move from the particular to the general and more or less stay there.

Inadvertent Truth Claims

In terms of universality as epistemology, the tensions in Barrett's perspective are particularly noticeable. Not only Marx comes under the hammer for being too epistemological, but so also do 'softer' theorists of ideology such as John Thompson, who still retains the semi-traditional notion that ideologies work through a mechanism of 'dissimulation'.⁵⁶ This leads to the logical consequence that without either an 'organizing focus' on class, or a central 'epistemological dimension', we must wonder 'what substance and precision a theory of ideology can have' any more.⁵⁷ Barrett also goes on to claim that, ironically, the insights of apparently radical new theorists—of post-structuralists, and Laclau and Mouffe—themselves turn out to be distinctly 'epistemological'.⁵⁸ Even Foucault is ultimately characterized as 'not a relativist in any way'; indeed he is acknowledged to be a typical philosopher, operating conceptually upon other peoples' discourses at an Olympian meta-level, producing propositions that are 'themselves loaded to the brim with truth claims'.⁵⁹

I very much agree with all this, and it is incisively framed by Barrett, but she does not seem to realize that the ubiquity of epistemology backfires rather decisively on her own dominant message, which is that it was Marxism that put epistemology into ideology, and that both Marxism and perhaps ideology too must now be superseded because of that misguided universalism. In fact, when it comes to the crunch, Barrett is not prepared to argue this latter strong position at all. Instead, she comes up with a far more compromised solution. Because she knows that—as the case of the not-so-radicals shows—any serious intervention in critical social theory will inevitably carry associated epistemological baggage, she accepts that it is extremely difficult to 'let go of epistemological ambition'.⁶⁰ What she would recommend, however, is that we severely 'lower the epistemological profile' of the concept of ideology.⁶¹

The change of tone which accompanies the shift from the negative critique of Marxism to proposing something positive is striking. From a stance which seemed to outlaw and stigmatize epistemology, we now have one which merely downgrades it. And when we examine Barrett's considered account of ideology, the rationale for that more compromised meta-stance becomes obvious. In spite of her harsh dismissal of

⁵⁵ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, p. 161

⁵⁶ J.B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, Cambridge 1990; Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, pp. 29–30

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–2, 78

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

Thompson's position as amounting to 'soft epistemology', the concepts which Barrett 'rescues' from the blighted epistemological terrain are those of 'mystification' and the modernistically stronger 'misrepresentation'—terms which seem to differ only pedantically from Thompson's 'dissimulation'.⁶² In other words, when the chips are down Barrett herself reproduces a thoroughly epistemological definition of ideology: she cannot actually bring herself to 'deny' that (some of) the findings of science must be granted 'universal truth',⁶³ and the articulation of ideology as mystification and misrepresentation simply makes no sense without a backdrop assumption that there is something quasi-objective that is being mystified or misrepresented. The main intervention of the book is to be uncertain about *what* is getting misrepresented, not *that* something is misrepresented in and through ideology. Once again the major key of Barrett's post-Marxism misleads us into thinking that a decisive point of departure from the old style of thinking has been achieved, and that a more satisfactory positive direction has been developed. On both counts, this is not so.

Conclusion: Common Ground

The main purpose of this essay has been to try to show that post-Marxist discussions such as Michèle Barrett's tend to base their rejection of traditional Marxism on a superficial or postponed consideration of crucial and difficult explanatory problems such as those surrounding the 'four sins' of modernist theorizing. Sometimes combined with an altogether unearned tone of superiority and certainty, post-Marxists have proceeded to suggest or even take for granted, very questionably, that certain new directions in social theory—Foucault, post-structuralism—supply the resources for demonstrably more 'adequate' theories of ideology, subjectivity or whatever. Thus Barrett talks of the new 'theory of discourse' as a clear and productive alternative to the Marxist account of ideology.⁶⁴ Yet, as everyone who is familiar with this genre well knows, outside of a negative contrast with caricatured 'realist' paradigms, 'discourse theory', whilst interesting, is an extraordinarily heterogeneous area. Moreover, neither discourse theory nor any other post-Marxist or post-feminist alternative that I can think of supplies the 'more precise concepts' that Barrett thinks the new angles do provide.⁶⁵ Indeed, many of the terms in the new vocabularies of insight are manifestly—sometimes quite deliberately—*less* precise than those of an older provenance.

For these reasons, I have argued that versions of the 'four sins' are not only defensible but perhaps even inescapable in any searching explanatory endeavour. However, I want to conclude this paper on a more positive note, because I have not at all been recommending that theories which are openly and fully reductionist, functionalist, essentialist or universalist are therefore automatically 'better' than those which are not. And in defending aspects of specifically Marxist theory, I have not been arguing that Marxism can survive unqualified or that it has an exclusive

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 158.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 47.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 168.

grip on the truth. Finally, whilst I have been complaining about the lack of analytic discrimination in post-Marxist writings, I have not once said that their general concerns are improper or that they lack urgency. I would not have been wrestling in my own mind with Barrett's book since 1991 had I felt that. Indeed, that is exactly why I have sought to point up the nuanced and ambivalent 'minor key' in *The Politics of Truth* as compared with the overpitched 'major key' of renunciation.

How then are we to characterize the common ground that I see existing between complex Marxism and discriminating post-Marxism? To me the central question raised by postmodernist thinking concerns the status of explanation in social theory.⁶⁶ Contrary to the impression given in post-Marxism that new theories are more explanatorily 'adequate' to subjectivity and so forth than Marxism, the most interesting contributions suggest that we must try to get explanation itself back into proper perspective, paying greater attention to matters of description and imagining. This is what Barrett is getting at when she talks about the difficulty of 'letting go' of our explanatory ambitions in the theory of ideology.⁶⁷ Somehow we feel the need to thicken up our descriptive register in talking about ideological phenomena with a view to achieving greater *experiential* or *intuitive* adequacy but, as a consequence, we then worry that we might be getting too 'particularist', thus compromising our sense of *explanatory* adequacy. And vice versa.

To me, the most suggestive aspect of postmodernist theorizing has been its exploration of the overlaps and compatibilities—rather than the incompatibilities—between explanatory and descriptive forms of understanding. That domain, however, is exceptionally broad and, as yet, has no established dominant theorization: it is an area which covers all manner of 'rhetorical' modes in the formulation of abstract ideas, and it is a movement which generally seeks to re-emphasize the *affective* dimension of theoretical pronouncement and influence.⁶⁸ Given the breadth and openness of this interest in theoretical rhetoric and modes of persuasion, it should not be too surprising, perhaps, to note that postmodernists are joined in this endeavour by many who are temperamentally sympathetic, still, to a more 'modernist' characterization of the overall motivation for engaging in intellectual struggle. W.G. Runciman, whose thoughts on the methodology of social theory strike me as amongst the most careful and fruitful ever produced in that murky area, is a notable example. Runciman distinguishes between four related logics of enquiry in the social sciences—reportage, explanation, description and evaluation. In this matrix, description is no longer viewed as somehow equivalent to 'reportage', with its connotations of factual recording only. Rather, description is what we do once we have been as reliable about the data of our object of enquiry as we can, and once we have some grasp of some key potential explanations. Whilst the modes of reportage, explanation and description are crucial to social science, there can be no question of them somehow adding up to a neutral, singular and complete explanatory

⁶⁶ This is a concern shared by a growing number of social theorists. See, for instance, J. Holmwood and A. Stewart, *Explanation and Social Theory*, Basingstoke 1991.

⁶⁷ Barrett, *The Politics of Truth*, pp. 41–2.

⁶⁸ For a useful conspectus of the 'rhetorical turn' in social theory, see S. Seidman, ed., *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 187–241.

account. Whilst Runciman believes that rival theorists can come to reasonably close agreement on matters of reportage, the next stage is inherently contestable, since 'all descriptions are partial, just as all explanations are provisional'.⁶⁹ This means that whilst descriptions *build upon* familiar forms of causal or functional explanations, and certainly do not replace these modes, social scientific 'understanding' in the fullest sense always goes beyond explanation strictly speaking, evincing a high intrinsic degree of evaluative and descriptive license.

That freely interpreted lesson from Runciman and others suggests to me that whilst explanation—at least in its traditional sense—comes into understanding, the latter is something broader and perhaps ultimately wiser, involving a variety of dramatic re-presentations, analytical insights, and other apparently 'uncanny' forms of depicting the phenomenon in question and its wider human significance. This overall model of the search for understanding thus preserves the importance of explanatory power, but sees the domain of social understanding as being quite pluralistic, both 'horizontally' (a range of explanations may coexist) and 'vertically' (explanation is part of a larger chain of enquiry).

This essay has primarily concerned questions of methodology rather than politics. But the political implications of these meta-theoretical debates are not hard to see. Just as *both* radical pluralism and outright reductionism, essentialism, and so forth in social scientific methodology can be improved upon by adopting the kind of *integrated* explanatory pluralism I have been exploring here, so in radical democratic politics the dogmatic polarization which encourages a straight choice between old-style Marxian socialism and the new—sometimes in effect ultra-liberal—postmodernism seems to me both hopeless and unnecessary.⁷⁰ In that regard, I am sympathetic to Barrett's call for a renewed vision of radical humanism as one way forward.⁷¹ My main point in this counter-critique, however, is that much of the post-Marxist argumentation which surrounds that call fails to convincingly clarify or advance it.

⁶⁹ Runciman, *The Methodology of Social Theory*, p. 227

⁷⁰ I have pursued these themes around pluralism in my *Marxism, Pluralism and Beyond*, Cambridge 1989, and *Pluralism*, Buckingham 1995.

⁷¹ Other—somewhat different—rallyings round this revived banner of radical humanism are P. Johnson, *Feminism as Radical Humanism*, Boulder, Co 1994; J. Weeks, *Invented Moralities: Social Values in an Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge 1995.

‘In the Tropics There Is No Sin’: Sexuality and Gay–Lesbian Movements in the Third World

Same-sex erotic behaviour is virtually universal in human societies. Few societies that have been carefully studied have been found to yield no evidence of same-sex eroticism. One survey found that in forty-nine out of the seventy-six societies it examined, some form of same-sex sexual behaviour was socially acceptable.¹ But just what forms of sexuality exist and are considered acceptable varies enormously from one society to the next. Since the Stonewall rebellion in 1969, gay–lesbian movements have been rising up everywhere—including the Third World. Particularly since the 1980s, lesbians and gay men have declared their existence and formed organizations in Third World countries. Many of these people have shown extraordinary courage in being open about their lives and demanding their rights in the face of hatred and violence. Sometimes their struggle to live freely has even seemed to be directed against their own cultures and peoples, as when Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe banned the Zimbabwe Gay and Lesbian Association from an international book fair in August 1995, condemning gays as immoral and un-African.

Mugabe did an injustice to the burgeoning lesbian and gay communities and movements of southern Africa, as well as to the traditions of Zimbabwe's majority Shona people. In general, those who repress Third World lesbians and gay men are one-sidedly selecting from and manipulating indigenous traditions. Anti-gay attitudes do not help to free Third World peoples from outside domination. Rather, they are a single aspect of their more general suffering under the 'New World Order' and the current global economic crisis. Newly arising gay and lesbian movements are an aspect of Third World peoples' efforts to reclaim and re-define their nations and cultures.²

There are various reasons why it is difficult to create an analysis and strategy for gay-lesbian liberation in the Third World. When compared to the history of homosexuality in the West, same-sex eroticism in the Third World has been little studied, and many of the studies which do exist, mostly dating from the past decade or so, have been by Europeans, North Americans and Australians. Much data, particularly from old ethnographic studies, is tainted by racial and sexual prejudice. Even present-day activists and scholars in the Third World have sometimes translated European and North American gay-lesbian writings rather than theorize from their own research and experience. Another problem is the enormous diversity of both Third World social formations and cultures, and of sexualities in different classes or milieus even within a single country. Virtually the only thing that unites Third World countries, after all, is domination by imperialism which has had a fairly strong unifying effect on their economic structures, a somewhat lesser impact on other aspects of their social structures, and perhaps the most diverse and varying effects on their cultures, including their sexuality.

Unique Histories—Unique Sexualities

The starting points for Third World same-sex eroticism were the very varied indigenous sexualities of Asia, Africa and the Americas. Many indigenous kinship-based cultures of Africa and the Americas had same-sex eroticism of a 'transgenderal' type, in which certain people took on the social roles and characteristics of a different gender. By contrast, Islamic West and Central Asia and North Africa, where slaves and city-dwellers were often cut off from their original communities and kin, had same-sex sexualities that were largely age- and class-defined: male youths and slaves in these cultures sometimes took on 'passive', 'feminine' sexual roles. In the past five centuries, however, Third World sexual cultures have been overlaid by European and North American conquest and domination. Indigenous sexualities have often been suppressed or reshaped; different European and North American sexualities have been imposed or imported; and new, unique sexualities have emerged.

¹ Clellan S. Ford and Frank A. Beach, *Patterns of Sexual Behavior*, New York 1951, p. 130.

² Thanks to Christopher Beck, Arthur Bruls, Ken Davis, David Fernbach, Anne Finger, Jamie Gough, James Green, Salah Jaber, Gary Kinsman, Vibhuti Patel, Tom Partenson and the students of the 1993 IIRB Third World School for encouragement, help in finding sources, criticisms and suggestions. Thanks also to the staff of the Documentaire Centrum Homostudies, Amsterdam. Since this is very much a 'work in progress', comments are particularly welcome. Please send them c/o IIRB, Willemsparkweg 202, 1071 HW Amsterdam, Netherlands

Two forms of same-sex eroticism that developed in Europe, North America and Australasia from the fourteenth century onwards, and which can be termed 'commodified transgenderal' sexuality and 'reciprocal gay-lesbian sexuality', were different from any of the Third World's indigenous sexualities. European commodified transgenderal sexuality, which was notably brought to Latin America by the Spanish and Portuguese from the fifteenth century onwards, resembled traditional, kinship-based transgenderal sexuality in that it involved certain people taking on social roles and characteristics of another gender. But it differed from any traditional transgenderal sexuality in that it was largely urban, largely detached from rather than integrated into traditional kinship networks, more or less associated with prostitution for money rather than any kind of socially sanctioned marriage, and at odds with instead of sanctioned by the dominant religion. This type of sexuality put down deep roots in Latin America. Aspects of it seem to have been taken on by indigenous Southeast Asian transgenderal sexualities.

Reciprocal gay-lesbian sexuality arose only in the nineteenth century. As it spread, lesbians and gay men acquired identities and formed communities that were more sharply demarcated from a majority that was now, for the first time, explicitly defined as 'heterosexual'. This shift also fostered replacement of the transgenderal pattern of sexuality, polarized between 'masculine' and 'feminine' partners, with a more equitable pattern. Forms of reciprocal gay-lesbian sexuality have arisen later and taken different forms in the Third World than in Europe, North America and Australasia, for several reasons: later and more limited industrialization; later entry of women into the paid labour force; greater strength of family structures due in part to less developed welfare states; and poverty, which limits most Third World lesbians' and gay men's participation to a gay ghetto founded on consumption. Yet gay-lesbian communities have nonetheless grown up in the Third World, more and more quickly in recent decades. While European or North American influence may at times have facilitated the emergence of Third World gay-lesbian communities, the process of capitalist development *inside* Third World countries has been at least as important. If anything, Third World dependence on imperialist economics has helped to *delay* development of the material basis for Third World gay-lesbian communities.³

I. Indigenous Sexualities of the Third World

Given the enormous diversity of indigenous Third World sexualities, including same-sex eroticism, no real overview is possible here. This article cannot do justice to egalitarian forms of same-sex eroticism in some gathering-and-hunting cultures, for example, or to the 'transgenerational' sexuality between adolescent and adult males that anthropologists have described in some African, Amazonian, Melanesian and Australian

³ This study thus dissents from Dennis Altman's conclusion that even where 'a strong homosexual tradition predates the Western impact', it is 'Westernization' that 'introduces ... the idea of a homosexual identity' *The Homosexualization of America. The Americanization of the Homosexual*, New York 1982, p. 51.

aboriginal societies.⁴ It is possible, though, to make some general points and focus on a few examples, particularly on indigenous forms which have been important in one way or another to later sexual development in the Third World.

If and when same-sex love has been tolerated in a society, it has had to adapt to and be ideologically justified in terms of the society's gender and kinship systems. Kinship was particularly important and constricting in many pre-class societies in which the family was an important production unit and in which the division of labour was based largely upon gender. Many pre-class societies had extraordinarily elaborate marriage rules and clan structures. A wide range of same-sex sexualities have fitted into such kinship-based cultures. Often same-sex eroticism has been shaped into some quasi-kinship category, particularly through forms of 'transgenderal' sexuality, in which people were assigned social genders different from those we would consider their biological sex. Some forms of transgenderal sexuality have played an important role in shaping contemporary Third World same-sex eroticism.

Berdaches and Eunuchs

Transgenderal people, who in some magical way were given the social roles and attributes of a different gender, often played special military and/or social roles in indigenous cultures. Very often the transformation of gender and sexual practices went together: the range even of transgenderal sexualities has been extraordinarily wide. In some cultures transgenderal people have simply been reassigned from masculine to feminine or vice versa; in other cultures transgenderal males and females have been defined as a third or even fourth gender; in still others they have been defined as non-gendered. Transgenderal males in different societies could be seen as the 'wives' of other men, or as more or less honoured prostitutes, or as asexual. Although the sexual division of labour was often crucial to pre-class societies, in some there was little or no hierarchical difference between men and women; thus transgenderal people did not necessarily lose status through their transformation.⁵ On the contrary, they sometimes enjoyed great prestige as healers, conciliators or bearers of knowledge.

But male domination in many societies, even pre-class societies, has implications for sexuality. Lower status for women turns male-to-female transgenderalism into a degradation and female-to-male transgenderalism into an unacceptable escape from female status. At the same time, by segregating women from men in order to keep them from power, from activities restricted to men, and from men other than their fathers, husbands or masters, some male-dominated societies have tended to promote female bonding. This female bonding, including sexual activity,

⁴Ford and Beach, *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour*, pp. 131-32; David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, Chicago 1988, pp. 66-9, 27.

⁵Jolito S. Trevisan, *Pervers in Paradise*, trans. Martin Foreman, London 1986, p. 62; Greenberg, *Construction of Homosexuality*, pp. 42-5, 65. Ford and Beach found transgenderal sexuality the most common same-sex pattern among the seventy-six societies they studied, with examples on every continent. *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour*, p. 130.

has the *potential* in male-dominated societies to be felt or seen as a form of women's resistance, 'both the breaking of a taboo and the rejection of a compulsory way of life'. Many or most of the practices and institutions that enable men to oppress women can also serve specifically to repress lesbianism: 'men's ability to deny women sexuality or force it upon them; to command or exploit their labor to control their produce; to control or rob them of their children; to confine them physically and prevent their movement'; as is well known, such repression extends even to clitoridectomy in some parts of the Islamic world and the burning of widows in India.⁶

Transgenderal sexuality was particularly suited to cultures centred about the family and the village and was often enshrined in traditional religion. Transgenderal people in indigenous American cultures were often shamans, known as 'berdaches'. The transgenderal people still common today in much of Indonesia—called, among other things, 'waria'—were also apparently associated with androgynous deities before Islam spread through the region in the fifteenth century. Waria are still shamans in non-Muslim areas of Borneo and central Sulawesi today, while in eastern Java wizards (*waroks*) take same-sex teenage spouses. In southern Sulawesi *waria* still guard court regalia. Unlike Western transvestites, '*waria* are *waria* all day long.' Transgenderal shamans of a similar type were reported in the Philippines in Spanish accounts from the beginning of their conquest in 1589 and apparently existed there at least until 1738.⁷

Another form of transgenderal sexuality existed in the ancient Dahomeyan and Yoruba cultures of West Africa, whose religions included belief in possession by deities of a different gender. A similar cult existed among the Hausa of present-day Nigeria before their conversion to Islam. We will return to this example because of the way it has survived, at least partially, among African communities in the Americas. Religious transgenderalism also existed among southern African peoples which had *sangomas* or 'rain queens'. Among the Shona of present-day Zimbabwe, same-sex eroticism was traditionally associated with witchcraft—pace Robert Mugabe.⁸

Transgenderal sexuality, most common in societies prior to the formation of states, was sometimes suppressed as states emerged in the Americas and Africa. For example, the Incas suppressed it after conquering the coastal people of Chimú, who left a record in their pottery of their interest in sex between males. There is also evidence that it existed among some indigenous Mexican peoples, particularly in Juchitán in

⁶ Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', (1980), in Ann Snitow et al, eds, *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, New York 1983, pp. 183–97. Rich's work has been widely criticized for an ahistorical conception of lesbianism that ignores differences among societies and sexualities. Nonetheless, she points to realities that are constant across many centuries and cultures, including all class societies.

⁷ Dédé Oetomo and Bruce Emond, *Homosexuality in Indonesia*, trans. Sindhu Suyana, unpublished manuscript, 1992, pp. 6–7; *Gay in Indonesia. Selected Articles from the Print Media*, Fitzroy, Aus., 1984, p. 24; Sheril Berkovitch, 'Indonesian's waria', *Outrage* (Fitzroy), March 1990, pp. 42–3; Frederick L. Whitam, 'Philippines', in Wayne R. Dynes, ed., *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, New York and London, 1990, p. 981.

⁸ Stephen O. Murray, 'Africa, Sub-Saharan', *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, p. 23; Mike Coutinho, 'Black Gay Life in Zimbabwe', *BGM* (Washington, DC), no. 6, 1991.

Oaxaca, in Michoacán, and among the Huastecos and Totonacos of Veracruz and Puebla. Intolerance of gender nonconformity and transgender sexuality may have become more prevalent in ancient Mexico with the rise of the Aztec empire, whose culture stressed militarism and rigid gender roles.⁹ Aztec and Inca intolerance might have reflected pressure to replace kinship- and village-based social relations with structures based more upon class and state. It might also have been an assertion of superiority over conquered peoples among whom transgender sexuality had been more common, and indeed it may still be reflected in the treatment of Mexican and Andean lesbians and gay men today.

Transgender sexuality remained a strong tradition in South and Southeast Asia, perhaps because Hinduism preserved elements of earlier, kinship-based cultures even after the rise of centralized states. Indian cultural traditions are tolerant towards androgyny, as is evident from the androgynous character of major Hindu deities such as Siva. Imagery of same-sex love can be found on thousand-year-old Indian temples in Khajuraho and Konarek. The transition to class society in South Asia probably helped bring about the severe constriction of women's public life now characteristic of Hinduism, and also probably lowered the status of transgender people. Nonetheless, when compared to other cultures, South Asian culture still seems not to strongly associate masculinity with breaking free from the mother and with machismo.¹⁰

In any event, the rise of class society required fitting transgender people into a more elaborate division of labour and a more developed hierarchy. The Indian transgender *bijra* was traditionally conceived as a hermaphrodite—a person with both male and female sexual organs—from birth, though it is doubtful that most *bijras* were in fact born hermaphrodites. Those who were not were emasculated by other *bijras*, while those living as *bijras* but resisting emasculation faced disapproval and pressure. They have always dressed as women and lived together in groups under the direction of a *bijra* guru. They were supposed to be under the protection of the goddess Bahuchara Mata, and to have the power to bless or curse. Economically, they have functioned as paid performers at weddings and births, as shampooers, and to some extent as prostitutes: the fourth- or fifth-century *Kama Sutra* mentions eunuchs, among others, in its detailed instructions for oral sex (*anparishataka*).¹¹

A similar tradition existed in Thailand. The Thai word *katboey*, which primarily means 'hermaphrodite', has also been used to describe trans-

⁹ Stephen O. Murray, 'Andean Cultures', *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, p. 53; Greenberg, *Construction of Homosexuality*, pp. 165–7; Ian Lumaden, *Homosexuality, Secrecy and the State in Mexico*, Toronto, 1991, pp. 13–15, 24–5; Geoffrey Kimball, 'Aztec Homosexuality: The Textual Evidence', *Journal of Homosexuality* (Chicago), vol. 26, no. 1 (1993), pp. 15–17. The extent of same-sex eroticism and of repression among the Aztecs is however very much disputed.

¹⁰ AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), *Less Than Gay: A Citizen's Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India*, 1991, excerpted in Rakesh Ratti, ed., *A Lotus of Another Color. An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience*, Boston 1993, p. 24; see also in the same volume, Ratti's 'Introduction', p. 13, and his essay, 'Feminism and Men', p. 49.

¹¹ Arvind Kumar, 'Hijras: Challenging Gender Dichotomies', *A Lotus of Another Color*, pp. 86–90, citing Serena Nanda, *Neither Men nor Women: The Hijras of India*, Belmont, CA 1990; ABVA, *Less Than Gay*, excerpted in *A Lotus of Another Color*, pp. 22–4.

vestites and other men who take on 'feminine' roles. Thai Buddhist ethical literature contains only one prohibition relative to *katboeys*, interestingly enough, which is the prohibition of magic that would 'make a *katboey*... change back into a man or make a man change into a *katboey*'. Thai traditions, which allowed married men to keep concubines and visit prostitutes, permitted *katboeys* to fill these roles as well. With the consolidation of a rigid class society, however, Buddhist authorities urged the nobility, supposedly further advanced on the road to enlightenment, to refrain from sexual excesses which included sex with males.¹²

Beloved Youths

In class-based societies outside South and Southeast Asia, kinship-linked transgenderal sexuality seems to have been a relatively rare form of same-sex eroticism. Particularly in slave-based economies in which the lower class was torn apart from its kinship and community ties, age-defined or class-defined male-male sexuality was common. In these cultures males taking 'feminine' roles were supposed to be socially inferior to, or just younger than, the men who had sex with them. This was the most common form of same-sex eroticism in the Mayan empire, in the countries of Greek or Latin culture along the Mediterranean, in the Persian-Arab-Islamic world, and in the empires and kingdoms of East Asia.¹³

Despite explicit condemnations of male-male sexuality, for example in the Koran, homoeroticism pervaded much of mediaeval Arabic love poetry, and appeared in such classics as *A Thousand and One Nights*. 'It is probably fair to say that most pre-modern Arabic poetry is ostensibly homosexual', one scholar notes, summing up the prevalent attitude with the phrase: 'There is the sort of love men have for their wives, which is good but not passionate; and there is the sort of love men have for each other, which is passionate but not good.' References to male-male sexuality in mediaeval Arabic sources fell fairly clearly into an age-defined pattern: when the beloved was not a youth between fifteen and twenty years old—such as a youth at court or a student in a Koranic school—he was almost always either a slave or an androgyne.¹⁴

This kind of homoeroticism apparently spread with Arab-Persian-Islamic culture, for example into the Indian subcontinent, where it was celebrated by classical Urdu and Sufi poets. Love of boys was practised at

¹² Peter A. Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand: An Interpretation of Contemporary Thai Sources*, Elmhurst, NY 1989, pp. 20, 26, 37, 51–2. The Buddhist text cited is the *Brhadmajala Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya*, verse 25.

¹³ Greenberg, *Construction of Homosexuality*, pp. 91, 164.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 173–9, 26; Malek Chebel, *L'Esprit du street: perversions et marginalités sexuelles au Maghreb*, Paris 1988, pp. 25, 27, 22, 40; John Boswell, 'Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories', *Hidden from History*, p. 27. Rex Wockner cites Jeanette Wakin of Columbia University as saying that the Koran does not condemn homosexuality (Wockner, 'Homosexuality in the Arab and Moslem World', in Stephan Likosky, ed., *Coming Out: An Anthology of International Gay and Lesbian Writings*, New York 1992, p. 104), but in fact the Koran quotes Lot, regarded as a Jewish prophet and predecessor of Muhammad, as saying, 'Are you blind that you should commit indecency, lustfully seeking men instead of women?' and, 'Will you fornicate with males and leave your wives, whom Allah has created for you? Surely you are great transgressors'. *The Koran*, trans. N J Dawood, Baltimore 1968, pp. 84 (27. 56), 203 (26. 165–6).

the court of the fifteenth-century Afghan ruler Huseyn Mirza as well as in nineteenth-century Bukhara in present-day Uzbekistan. Babar, the first Moghul emperor of India, wrote love poems in the Islamic tradition to his beloved boy favourite Baburi, and there is evidence of other, similar relationships in aristocratic circles in eighteenth-century Delhi. Similar relationships are reported in Turkey and Albania. In East Africa alone, interestingly, did the higher status of women lead to the adaptation of the Islamic male-male pattern to lesbianism.¹⁵

In Indonesia, on the other hand, the region's vast expanse allowed for a great variety of indigenous sexualities in different regions. Along with the most common transgendered *waria*, and the transgenerational sexuality practised among the Papuans of western New Guinea, Islamic influence has been visible in relationships between adult and adolescent males in western Sumatra. Relationships between older and younger male students in Muslim boarding schools in central and eastern Java were also in evidence as early as the eighteenth century.¹⁶ Pre-colonial India and Indonesia, along with pre-colonial Mexico and Peru, thus provide examples of complex combinations of indigenous sexual cultures. In India and Indonesia, older kinship-based transgendered sexualities coexisted with age-defined sexuality linked to Islam. In Mexico and Peru, sexualities indigenous to one culture may have been decreasingly tolerated because of conquest by another.

Indigenous forms of sexuality survive into the modern Third World, but rarely in pure form. With the European conquest and domination of increasing areas of the Americas, Africa and Asia, these indigenous forms were combined with forms imposed or introduced by Europeans at different points during a 600-year process of sexual development in Europe and North America. Because the process overlapped with the European and North American impact on Third World societies and sexualities, indigenous Third World sexualities interacted with European and North American sexualities at various stages. In particular, the Third World has been influenced by a 'commodified transgendered' sexuality that arose in late medieval and early modern Europe. The generalization of commodity production and exchange in Europe undermined sexuality based on feudal kinship hierarchies. Prostitution spread—mainly female, but also sometimes male—and covert communities of men sexually available to other men arose, in northern Italy as early as the fourteenth century, in France in the fifteenth century, and in England and Holland in the seventeenth century.¹⁷ Surrounded at first by feudal societies, later by capitalist societies recently emerged from feudalism, these men tended to model their sexual relationships on the hierarchies of the larger society, take on sexual and gender roles analogous to those assigned to women, and have sex with 'real men' more or less outside their communities.

¹⁵ Stephen Wayne Foster, 'Afghanistan', *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, p. 18, ABVA, *Less than Grey*, in *A Lotus of Another Color*, pp. 31–2, Greenberg, *Construction of Homosexuality*, pp. 179–82. Curiously, the French word for transgendered shamans, 'berdache', was borrowed from the Persian word for 'young slave', *berdag*. Greenberg, p. 41.

¹⁶ Oetomo and Emond, *Homosexuality in Indonesia*, pp. 7, 3–4.

¹⁷ Ellen Ross and Rayna Rupp, 'Sex and Society. A Research Note from Social History and Anthropology' (1981), in Soutow et al, *Powers of Desire*, p. 65; Greenberg, *Construction of Homosexuality*, pp. 330–1.

This was the dominant pattern of same-sex eroticism among the Europeans who conquered most of the Americas, Asia and Africa from the sixteenth century onwards. Only in the twentieth century would another sexuality that first appeared in Europe—reciprocal gay—lesbian sexuality—take root in the Third World.

Beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the wake of the Dutch, English, French and American revolutions, notions of love, desire and free choice became the basis first of bourgeois marriage, and then as industries grew and capitalism became dependent on mass consumption, of middle-class and later working-class family life. Even women won some freedom in their personal lives; even the gender of a sexual partner or companion became a possible choice and criterion of self-identification. 'Homosexuality' became for the first time in late-nineteenth-century Europe the domain of a specifically and systematically identified set of people which included not just transgendered people but *all* those engaging in same-sex activity. Material preconditions for this change were large-scale, rapid urbanization—which multiplied the size of urban gay communities and loosened their members' family ties—and available jobs at wages seen as decent. During the twentieth century, reciprocal sexual relationships between self-identified lesbian women or between self-identified gay men, in which 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles do not necessarily determine sexual identity, gradually became dominant in gay—lesbian communities in advanced capitalist countries, though the "homosexual" displaced the [transgendered] "fairy" in middle-class culture several generations earlier than in working-class culture.¹⁸ Beginning in the 1890s, lesbians and gay men influenced by feminism or other radical ideologies organized politically, giving rise by the 1970s to demands for the abolition of the social categories of gender and of 'homosexuality' and 'heterosexuality'. Despite lower incomes and thus more restricted possibilities for life outside the family, urbanization and social change in the Third World have also led to the emergence of gay—lesbian communities and movements there.

II. Combined and Uneven Development Of Sexualities

While patterns of First World sexual development have recurred in the Third World, they have never been exactly repeated, being combined with various indigenous sexualities. Particularly with the advent of classical imperialism in the late nineteenth century, there has also been a tendency for forms of sexuality brought by Europeans to develop somewhat differently in the Third World than they have in Europe, North America or Australasia. The range of sexualities that exists in the Third World today can only be understood as a product of this combined and uneven development.

In Latin America, for instance, where European domination occurred

¹⁸ There is now an extensive literature on these developments. See particularly John D'Emilio, 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', in Snitow et al, *Powers of Desire*, and Jamie Gough and Mike McNair, *Gay Liberation in the Eighties*, London 1985. See also George Chauncey, *Gay New York. Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940*, New York 1994, p. 27

early, where indigenous peoples were subjugated or even in some regions exterminated, where European colonial settlement was widespread, and where the culture has continued to be open to European and North American influence, sexuality during the past five centuries has been particularly subject to this type of development. Naturally, imported sexualities have been most significant in areas of greatest European settlement such as the Southern Cone while indigenous sexualities have persisted most vigorously in Mesoamerica and the Andes. In much of Latin America, the two have coexisted and interacted. In South Asia, by contrast, ruled by the British for only two centuries, and Africa, most of which was formally ruled from Europe for less than a century, imported sexualities are relatively less important. However, economic subordination is a central fact of life for the entire Third World, and this has had a lasting impact on indigenous as well as imported sexual patterns. The idea of returning to a completely pre-colonial or non-Western sexuality is now everywhere utopian.

Since the forms and histories of European domination of the Third World have varied greatly, so have the forms of combined and uneven sexual development. We can sort out the wealth of material about same-sex eroticism in the Third World, according to a very rough schema, into five broad patterns, several of which have often coexisted in shaping the sexualities of particular countries and even of particular individuals. These five patterns, which we shall discuss in turn, are:

- 1) The *suppression of indigenous same-sex eroticism* where Third World sexual customs were simply wiped out along with its ways of life—and sometimes along with its inhabitants.
- 2) The *adaptation of indigenous same-sex eroticism* where sexualities survived and gradually took on new forms better adapted to the requirements of dependent capitalist development.
- 3) The *imposition of same-sex eroticism on Third World people by outsiders*, either through the coercion of conquest and enslavement or through economic and social pressures.
- 4) The *persistence of commodified, underground transgendered sexualities* in the Third World because of under-development and the consequent lack of the material and social conditions for reciprocal gay-lesbian sexuality.
- 5) Social and political *repression of same-sex eroticism*, as part of the process of the development of modern family structures in the Third World which has engendered, finally: *gay-lesbian resistance* to repression and the emergence of distinctive Third World gay-lesbian movements.

1. Exterminating Sodomites

Throughout much of the areas conquered by Europeans in the Americas, Asia and Africa, and especially in regions of intensive settler colonialism, the imposition of European rule was accompanied by the imposition of European sexual mores. The prohibition of certain indigenous sexual practices was part of a far-reaching process of making colonized societies serve their conquerors' needs, just as the disintegration of kinship structures facilitated the establishment of exploitative forced or waged labour. Sometimes, though, such prohibitions were simply an expression of

Europeans' moralism—and hypocrisy. On the one hand, the sexual customs of the conquered peoples were often repressed on the grounds that they were brutal, primitive, un-Christian or immoral. On the other hand, the overwhelming power of the conquerors over the conquered meant that they could impose new customs whose cruelty or coerciveness often exceeded what had preceded them.

The Christian puritanism of the Europeans often led them to repress central institutions of Third World kinship systems such as polygamy. Since societies without states, including those in most of North America and Australia, were particularly vulnerable to European conquest and domination, their same-sex sexualities—often of the transgenderal type—were most likely to disappear through subjugation, conversion and assimilation. The existence of same-sex eroticism among the indigenous peoples of the Americas was even used as a pretext by the Spanish for exterminating them or, at the very least, for conquering, dispossessing and converting them. The same pretext was used in North America, particularly during the US conquest of the West in 1880–1910. In Brazil at least one slave was accused before the Inquisition in 1591–93 of having brought the practice of 'passive sodomy' from the area of modern Angola or Zaire. The Portuguese also burned 'sodomites' in sixteenth-century Goa.¹⁹

2. The Persistence of Indigenous Sexualities

Usually, however, indigenous sexualities have not been completely wiped out by imperialism, particularly given Europeans' failure or sometimes lack of interest in converting African and Asian colonized peoples to Christianity. Even in the Americas, where some brand of Christianity became the dominant religion almost everywhere, elements of the dominated peoples' cultures, religions and sexualities showed remarkable resilience. Enslaved Africans transplanted to the Americas, for example, despite the suppression of their political and social structures and their very languages, retained elements of their original cultures, a fact that scholars have only recently acknowledged.

Some observers suggest that the tolerance for same-sex eroticism that exists in Haiti today might reflect the belief in possession by deities of a different gender in the *voodoo* religion. Gay Haitians, condemned by the Haitian Catholic church, seek out the relative freedom of *voodoo* celebrations and the annual Carnival parades. The belief in cross-gender possession found in *voodoo*, along with faith in androgynous deities, is found in the *candomblé* religion which originated around 1830 in Bahia, Brazil, many of whose inhabitants were, like Haiti's, slaves brought from the ancient Dahomeyan kingdom of West Africa. In Cuba, *santería*, derived mainly from Yoruba religion, 'was and still is a favoured form of gender transcendence for many Cuban homosexual men and lesbians.'²⁰ All these forms of sexuality are survivals of indigenous West African

¹⁹ Trevisan, *Perverts in Paradise*, p. 55; Greenberg, *Construction of Homosexuality*, p. 311.

²⁰ Stephen O. Murray, 'Haiti', *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, p. 516; Trevisan, *Perverts in Paradise*, pp. 171–4; Lourdes Arguëlles and B. Ruby Rich, 'Homosexuality, Homophobia and Revolution: Notes Toward an Understanding of the Cuban Lesbian and Gay Male Experience', *Hidden from History*, p. 445.

transgenderal sexualities. Ironically, even as Europeans suppressed *berdaches* among indigenous American peoples, others seem to have travelled to the Americas on the Europeans' own slave ships.

To take another example, the survival of the indigenous, medieval male-male eroticism of the Arab-Islamic world is reflected in the fact that sex between males is reputed to be common in North Africa and the Middle East today, despite the virtual absence of gay communities. This is sometimes attributed to the great difficulty of premarital or extramarital sex between males and females in many Arab countries. One recent authority writes: 'Pederasty between children or young people does not give rise to great indignation'; another adds that male-male eroticism 'continues to fuel Maghrebian fantasies'. Popular Egyptian and other Arab male singers of the 1950s and 1960s still used the word 'beloved' in the masculine form, even when the songs ostensibly referred to females. Similar patterns seem to persist in Islamic countries such as Pakistan, where male prostitution is common in cities like Karachi and less policed than extramarital sex between males and females. Muslim Malays who settled in South Africa under Dutch rule are popularly believed to have originated *moeffie* same-sex traditions there.²¹

One pernicious way in which such indigenous forms of sexuality can be adapted to the modern world, in cultures where passive sexuality in men is traditionally stigmatized, is by raping male social inferiors, prisoners or enemies. Allegations of such rapes are usually impossible to check. At the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, for example, such charges circulated as rumours on both sides: that rich Kuwaiti men had raped—and killed—Arab immigrant boys, and that invading Iraqi soldiers had raped male Kuwaitis.²²

3. 'In the Tropics There Is No Sin'

The other side of Europeans' attempts to suppress indigenous sexualities in the Third World has been the imposition of coercive and inequitable forms of sexuality. In the great majority of cases they have been imposed by colonizing men on colonized women, yet occasionally, in a small minority of cases, on colonized men. The imposition of European same-sex sexuality, though contrary to the conquerors' religions and official policies, has sometimes taken blatant and brutal forms. Many such kinds of sexual activity flourished in American and African countries where European slave-holders and conquerors had almost boundless power over those they owned or ruled. Slave-owners could force their slaves into sexual submission or prostitution.²³ Among the Portuguese and Dutch in Brazil, for example, it was said that—at least for white people—*infra equinoxiale nil peccari*; in the tropics there is no sin.

²¹ Joel Bousquet, *L'époque sexuelle de l'Islam*, p. 42; cited in Chebel, *L'Esprit du sérail*, p. 21. Mark Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', in Gevisser and Cameron, eds, *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*, Johannesburg 1994, p. 28. Given the transgenderal character of *moeffie* subculture, however, pre-Islamic *moeffie* influence seems more likely than any specifically Islamic influence.

²² Wockner, 'Homosexuality', *Coming Out*, p. 112, Greenberg, *Construction of Homosexuality*, p. 181.

²³ Treviñan, *Perverts in Paradise*, pp. 22, 23.

The abolition of slavery and the virtual disappearance of formal colonialism has ended most of these more blatant forms of sexual coercion. Yet the imposition of sexuality on Third World people by Europeans continues—and they are now joined by North Americans, Australasians and Japanese. The increased ease and lower cost of travel in recent decades have expanded the possibilities for 'sex tourism' from richer countries which is again overwhelmingly male–female but also sometimes male–male. Third World people who have 'freely' chosen to cater to this tourism have often submitted to the veiled coercion of poverty, although some of them may perceive it as giving them greater resources, greater freedom or both. While not all work in the sex trade has been outright prostitution, much of it has been.

Many Third World areas have become centres for sex tourism, sometimes particularly of male–male sex tourism. In those Third World cities that cater to this trade, its influence can be felt even by people who are not directly involved. The stigma associated with the sex trade probably varies in intensity depending on the indigenous sexualities that preceded it; in Thailand, for example, sex tourism has apparently led Thais to more readily associate transgenderal *katboys* with prostitution and corruption. Since *katboys* seem to have traditionally been involved in more long-term or structured relationships, sex tourism seems to have brought a decline in their status.²⁴ In Latin America, where *pasivos* were always stigmatized, it has probably not made as much difference. In the Maghreb, where the hegemonic assumption seems to be that foreign men's Arab sex partners are either playing the active role, just going through a youthful phase, or both, the stigma may be less. In any event, people in Third World countries do not always experience the centres for sex tourism as entirely oppressive and demeaning. These milieus can also 'provide a transition for local youth between the traditional restraints of the national culture and the attractions of the West'. In Thailand, given traditional hierarchies and conformity, relationships with foreigners 'relieve Thai homosexuals of many social pressures'.²⁵ Crackdowns on these milieus which are implemented without democratic consultation, as in post-revolutionary Havana or Ho Chi Minh City, can be experienced as being even more oppressive than exploitation in the sex trade itself.

4. Transgenderal Undergrounds in the Third World

Third World people often think of the sexualities associated with sex tourism as something alien. Yet, as we have seen, even the sexualities that Third World people feel to be their own often bear little resemblance to those which existed before European conquest. In particular, commodified, covert forms of transgenderal sexuality have arisen in the Third World as urbanization has undermined traditional family structures, and have often persisted even after they have been largely supplanted in Europe by forms of reciprocal sexuality. This divergence is to be expected, given that all the factors that led to the rise of European

²⁴ Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 227.

²⁵ Altman, *Homosexualization of America*, p. 51; Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 92.

transgenderal undergrounds (urbanization, commodification, the weakening of family ties and religious authority) and of reciprocal gay-lesbian sexuality (industrialization, women's emancipation, an ideology of sexuality and love, a welfare state supplanting many family functions) have come later and less universally to the Third World.

Large-scale urbanization in Latin America late in the nineteenth century, particularly in the Southern Cone, fostered the growth of transgenderal undergrounds similar to those of Europe and North America. Such transgenderal communities appeared in Argentina not long after they did in the US—before the First World War in Buenos Aires—complete with the dress codes, slang and festivities that characterized them elsewhere. Since then, Latin America's under-development has helped perpetuate similarly polarized gender systems and transgenderal patterns of sexuality. In Brazil, there is still 'a very easy relationship between men sexually, as long as one of them is sexually active and the other sexually passive'. The popular terms in Spanish are 'activo' and 'pasivo'. Or, in the cruder Brazilian phraseology, 'The macho fucks the *bicha* without being reduced to the *bicha*'s status, much less being emotionally involved'. In pre-revolutionary Cuba the crude words for *pasivo* were *loca* ('crazy woman') or *marichón*; many small Cuban villages had a *loca* or *marichón*, whose lives were very different from those caught up in the sex trade of Havana. In Mexico today, one can still find men who not only see themselves as 'feminine', but are attracted only to men who are also sexually involved with women. One recent survey of Ecuadorian gay activists found that 96 per cent preferred sex with 'straight' men.²⁶ In urban Latin America particularly, *pasivos* often dramatize their 'feminine' roles through transvestism.

European influence over Southeast Asia began early but proceeded slowly. While the Portuguese and Spanish settled and fortified strategic areas from the fifteenth century, and were followed by the Dutch, French and English, conquest of Indonesia and the Philippines was completed only several centuries later. Other countries, such as Thailand, were never formally conquered by Western powers, though of course they have been heavily influenced by them. As a result, traditional transgenderal sexualities—of Thai *katboeys*, Indonesian *waria*, and so on—have taken on more commodified forms without losing their traditional roots. The spread of transvestite beauty contests, common in much of contemporary Latin America but presumably not a tradition of ancient Southeast Asia, is one indication. Thai *katboeys* now gather for many annual beauty contests, which are a long-standing tradition. *Moffies* in the 'Coloured' community of South Africa's Cape region have similar transgenderal features, including the tradition that the annual Cape Coon Carnival be led by a *moffie*; transgenderal *shasanas* have an analogous

²⁶ Daniel Bao, 'Invertidos sexuales, tortilleros, and maricones machos: The Construction of Homosexuality in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1900–1950', *Journal of Homosexuality* (Chicago), vol. 24, nos. 3–4 (1993), pp. 192, 208, 205. Jared Brauterman, 'Fighting AIDS in Brazil' (1990), *Coming Out*, p. 299; Treviñan, *Perverts in Paradise*, p. 36; José Yglesias, *In the Fist of the Revolution*, cited in Young, *Guys under the Cuban Revolution*, p. 6; Argüelles and Rich, 'Homosexuality, Homophobia and Revolution', *Hidden from History*, p. 444; Joseph M. Garner, 'Gay Liberation and Coming Out in Mexico', *Coming Out*, p. 495; Lucien Chauvin, 'A Key Decade for Latin American Gays and Lesbians', *ILGA Bulletin*, February 1992, p. 11.

position in townships in the Johannesburg region, largely among men of Zulu origin, though the 1992 Johannesburg Lesbian–Gay Pride March was led not by *sheshaas* but by their ‘male, non-gay’ *injonga* boyfriends!²⁷

The Thai example is particularly complex. The tradition of *katboys* clearly predates any contact with Europe yet Thailand’s incorporation into the world market began as early as the seventeenth century, and the transition from feudalism to capitalism proceeded slowly until the late nineteenth-century abolition of serfdom and beyond. The impact of social change on sexuality has been gradual. Formal polygamy only died out in Thailand in the early years of this century, while formal concubinage still exists. The Buddhist tradition that required of upper-class people a high standard of sexual restraint while being looser about lower-class sexual mores is also still influential. Next to the enduring strength of *katboy* patterns, a gay identity linked to reciprocal sexuality has taken only a tenuous hold. The rapid rise of the sex trade since the 1970s has accelerated the formation of a gay community without marginalizing traditional sexualities despite the introduction of gay publications and international gay terms and trends into the *katboy* world.²⁸

The spread of the sex trade among transgenderal people is another indication of a shift from traditional to commodified sexualities. In South and Southeast Asia in particular, the bulk of the sex trade—including the same-sex trade—serves the domestic market, not sex tourism. Estimates have put the number of young or ‘under-age’ prostitutes, female and male, at 800,000 in Thailand, 400,000 in India, 20,000 in the Philippines—more than half of them boys—and 10,000 in Sri Lanka.²⁹

Since their entry into the work force and emergence from traditional dependence has occurred later, divergences between forms of sexuality in Third World and advanced capitalist countries affect women, and thus lesbians, in particular ways. Third World lesbian milieus are sometimes reminiscent of the old, polarized, ‘butch–femme’ patterns that were still strong in North America in the 1950s. In Mexico, lesbian ‘machas’ and ‘colonels’ have formal weddings with ‘femmes’—who often take care of children from previous heterosexual marriages, since early marriage is common. A similar, underground lesbian culture exists in the black South African township of Soweto. Sports is a common form of bonding among butch lesbians from Peru to India.³⁰

²⁷ Sjon Hauser, ‘Thailand: een homoparadijs?’, *Onze Wereld*, July–August 1990, p. 36; Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 195; Whitam, ‘Philippines’, *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, p. 980. Gevisser, ‘A Different Fight for Freedom’, in *Defiant Desire*, pp. 18, 28; Hugh McLean and Linda Ngcobo, ‘Abangibhamayo bathu ngumnandi’, in *Defiant Desire*, pp. 164–5.

²⁸ Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, pp. 45, 48–51, 233, 241, 6–7, 12.

²⁹ ‘Aziatische landen maken zich zorgen over seks-industrie’, *Het Vrije Volk* (Amsterdam), 16 May 1990; Whitam, ‘Philippines’, *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, pp. 981–82.

³⁰ Wieringa, ‘An Anthropological Critique’, in Dennis Altman et al., eds, *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?*, London 1989, pp. 215, 217; Juliette Falquet, ‘Todas somos hermanas’, *Bulletin des Archives Lesbennes*, February 1991, p. 25; Ruth Bhengu, ‘South Africa. Black Lesbians Come in Out of the Cold’, *ILGA Bulletin* (Brussels), no. 4 (1990), p. 21; ‘The Other Face of the Moon’, *Cosmos* (Oakland CA), no. 29, 1989, p. 17; Maruma, ‘Reflections of an Indian Lesbian’, *Shemakani*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1991).

Visible Communities Emerge

Transgenderal forms sometimes seem to persist longer among working-class people, who are less likely to command the wages necessary to participate in a gay world separate from traditional family structures. Where gay ghettos do exist in the Third World, they are more likely to be middle-class preserves than in the First World; working-class lesbians and gays in the Third World can rarely afford to go to discos or fancy bars. In Indonesia, where 'gay' has become the most common word for same-sex eroticism in middle-class circles, the distinction between 'gay' and 'waria' is less clear among poorer people. In Peru, a group of soccer-playing, working-class lesbian *machas* who encountered middle-class lesbian feminists suspected their middle-class sisters of wanting to turn them into *femmas*. One Mexican study found gay students—presumably middle-class in origin or at least in aspiration—particularly likely to abandon gender polarization, with three-fourths rejecting *activo* or *pasivo* roles. In Brazil a reciprocal gay (*entendido*) identity began to grow up mainly among upper-class men as early as the 1950s and spread more broadly in the 1960s and 1970s.³¹ This class difference may decrease with a rise in either working-class living standards or gay consciousness. In any event, it by no means precludes working-class participation in growing gay-lesbian communities.

With or without a major shift from transgenderal to reciprocal sexuality, the rise of more visible gay-lesbian communities becomes possible wherever businesses catering to same-sex networks are established. Once such networks grow, it becomes more likely for a broad group, including transgenderal people, to spend more time in an emergent gay community and to begin to identify with it. Although the economic foundation for gay life is still weaker in most Third World countries than in Europe, North America, Australasia or Japan, 'the market is now sufficiently developed in all but the very poorest Third World countries for gay people to exist.'³² At least, the market is sufficiently developed in capitals and some other major cities, for gay-lesbian communities can be slow to spread to provincial centres, let alone the countryside. In Thailand the gay scene is incomparably more important in Bangkok, which has incomes over twice the national average and a population forty times larger than the next biggest city. In Turkey, with a level of economic development higher than the average in the Middle East, gay subcultures, virtually unique in the Islamic world, have grown up in the big cities—Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir.³³ Whether economic potential is

³¹ Oetomo and Emond, *Homosexuality in Indonesia*, pp. 13–17; 'The Other Face of the Moon', *Communitas*, no. 29, 1989, p. 17; Joseph M. Carrier, *Urban Mexican Male Homosexual Encounters*, Ph.D. dissertation, Irvine, University of California, 1975, pp. 120–1; James N. Green, 'Feathers and Fists: A Comparative Analysis of the Argentine and Brazilian Gay Rights Movements of the 1970s', unpublished manuscript, March 1994, pp. 20, 13, citing Edward McCrae, *A Construção de Igualdade: Identidade Sexual e Política no Brasil da 'Abertura'*, Campinas 1990.

³² Jamie Gough and Mike McNair, *Gay Liberation in the Eighties*, London 1985, p. 88.

³³ Lumsden, *Homosexuality, Society and the State*, 26; Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT), 'Resolución del Comité Central sobre la lucha por la liberación de los homosexuales', in *Liberación Homosexual: Un Análisis Marxista*, Mexico 1983, p. 20; Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, p. 46; Alex de Meijer, 'Homosexualiteit in de islamitische wereld: In het geniep wordt veel toegestaan', *Gruisdeels* (Amsterdam), no. 18, 16 June 1994.

translated into an actual gay-lesbian community depends on many cultural and ideological factors. Distinct communities may emerge more slowly, for example, where lesbians and gay men are camouflaged by widespread, public male and female bonding—such as Mexican *machismo*.³⁴ Even a huge and open centre of same-sex activity like Bangkok does not become the site of a community until enough people think and act as a community.

5. 'Modernization' and Anti-Gay Bigotry

In the Third World, as in the early development of the advanced capitalist countries, the rise of a stronger state apparatus has made possible more thorough sexual repression. The attempt to create nuclear family structures, thought to be an important aspect of 'modernization', has often been a motive. Furthermore, global economic crises hit the Third World hardest, so popular impulses to find scapegoats can be strong. The greatest irony is the propensity of many Third World governments to associate same-sex eroticism with the resented West. AIDS has reinforced the tendency, which already existed in Third World countries, to associate same-sex sexuality with disease, corruption and imperialism. Anti-gay prejudice has helped ensure that transgendered people are disproportionately illiterate, under-educated, poor and involved in crime. This, in a vicious circle, justifies further prejudice. Some Third World peoples associate same-sex sexuality with sex-segregated institutions such as prisons and migrant-labour compounds which spread with colonization.³⁵

In recent decades in many Third World countries virtually universal and invisible repression has given way to explicit, publicized and politicized repression. Prejudice has acquired greater force when governments or political movements have found it useful, shifting responsibility for a crisis onto minority groups or mobilizing the population in a controlled way. Anti-gay campaigns have been exploited by several different types of Third World regimes and movements: authoritarian populists; the fascist and quasi-fascist Right; religious fundamentalists; and latter-day Maoists. 'Moral renovation', for instance, was a theme of the Mexican regime's anti-gay persecutions of the 1970s, when that regime had greater anti-imperialist pretensions than it does today. In 1988 the Aquino government in the Philippines backed a similar moral crusade which targeted gays among others.³⁶

Naturally, sexual repression has been even more vicious in countries where all popular movements are being repressed, as in the anti-gay campaigns of the Chilean junta between 1973 and 1989, and the killing and torture of gays under the Argentinian junta between 1976 and 1983. The Brazilian government rounded up and jailed 1,500 men in a drive against same-sex activity in São Paulo in 1979, and four thousand in 1980, helping to spark the rise of gay resistance. In Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and El Salvador, right-wing death squads have more

³⁴ Lumsden, *Homosexuality, Society and the State*, p. 32.

³⁵ Berkovitch, 'Indonesia's Waria', *Ostrage*, March 1990, p. 44; Greenberg, *Construction of Homosexuality*, pp. 70–1.

³⁶ Lumsden, *Homosexuality, Society and the State*, p. 53; Whitam, 'Philippines', *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, p. 981.

recently carried out 'social clean-up' murders, particularly of male prostitutes and transvestites. At least 328 men were killed in similar death-squad campaigns in Colombia between 1986 and 1990, often with the complicity of the army, while in Brazil at least 1,200 were killed over the course of a decade.³⁷

In the current global economic crisis, the popular hunger for scapegoats has intensified and has been seized upon by various political forces. In the upsurge of fundamentalist and communalist reaction and violence that has affected many countries, same-sex eroticism has often been among the targets. The fundamentalist regime in Iran, for example, ignoring 'a homosexual tradition dating back thousands of years', has attacked and even executed gay people on the grounds that they are 'a product of Western imperialism'. AIDS has further increased anti-gay persecution based on religious belief. In Mexico it provoked an attack on gays by the Catholic hierarchy and the allied right-wing group Pro-Vida. It has uncovered or created a puritanical side even in relatively tolerant Buddhism, with raids in 1987 by Bangkok's fundamentalist governor on 'offensive' publications.³⁸ In Peru the Sendero Luminoso guerrilla movement has also been reported to execute people involved in same-sex relationships. However, lesbians and gay men in the Third World are themselves providing the best antidote to such actions, through the resistance movements which they have begun to build.

III. The Rise of Gay-Lesbian Movements

Today gay-lesbian movements exist in at least fifty-two countries, including many countries of the Third World. Every Latin American country except Panama and Paraguay now has an organized gay-lesbian movement, many of them active since the mid-1980s. In Asia, gay-lesbian movements are known to exist in India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea; in Africa, in Egypt, Ghana, Liberia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Almost all push on despite a broad range of difficulties, from a serious shortage of funds or even office space to a complete lack of legal status.³⁹ These movements are not imitating Western fashion, for the

³⁷ Gough and McNair, *Gay Liberation in the Eighties*, p. 88; Catherine Durand, 'Argentine: les homos en péril', *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 412, 22 March 1990, p. 55; Green and Aziz, 'Gays and Lesbians', *Report on the Americas*, vol. 24, no. 4, (1993), p. 4; Moffat Clarke, 'Brazil. A New Product in the Streets', *Rites* (Toronto), September 1984, pp. 12-13; Lucien Chaurvin, 'Organizing Gay Men and Lesbians in Peru', *Gay Community News* (Boston), vol. 19, no. 6, 18 Aug. 1991; 'El Salvadoran Lesbian Group', *Off Our Backs*, vol. 23, no. 1, (1993), pp. 1, 8; Jairo A. Marín, 'Gay Life, Hard Life', *ILGA Bulletin*, no. 5, (1991) pp. 16, 18 (this was reprinted from *The Advocate*, Los Angeles) On Chilean anti-gay legislation see Catherine Durand, 'Chili: ils brisent le mur du silence', *Gai Pied Hebdo*, no. 533, 3 September 1992, p. 12; Micha Ramabero and Chille Deman, 'Chili. les lesbiennes plus combatives que les homosexuels', *Tel's Quot's* (Brussels), no. 69, November 1988, p. 8.

³⁸ Altman, *Homosexualization of America*, p. 51; Lumsden, *Homosexuality, Society and the State*, p. 67; Jackson, *Male Homosexuality in Thailand*, pp. 272-3. This article cannot deal adequately with the AIDS epidemic, one of the worst manifestations of Third World under-development.

³⁹ Manuel Rubio M. and Alvaro Fernández P., *Diagnostico sobre la realidad y necesidades de los grupos y organizaciones de homosexuales y lesbianas del América del Sur*, Philadelphia 1992, pp. 4, 9, 17; Likosky, *Coming Out*, pp. xvi, 213.

sexualities on which they are based are often distinctive to the Third World. They are defending existing Third World communities against their rulers, and expressing the human needs of people who are deeply rooted in their own cultures and societies. At the same time they are, just as much as Europeans and North Americans, caught up in global economic and social developments.

The First Wave: Latin America

Where gay-lesbian communities have even the barest existence, founded on a certain level of urban and market development, organization is possible. The first Third World countries to have mass gay-lesbian movements were among the most urbanized: Argentina beginning in 1969, followed by Mexico in 1971 and Puerto Rico in 1974. Brazil had dozens of underground gay papers even earlier in the early 1960s. The rise of gay-lesbian movements was particularly rapid when it converged with broader resistance to dictatorships, as in Argentina in the wake of popular uprisings against the dictatorship in 1969 and 1971. In Brazil, a congress called in 1976 by the Union of Brazilian Homosexuals was banned by the dictatorship's police. Only the rise of a strong popular movement against the dictatorship in the late 1970s, particularly the strike wave in 1978, made possible the spread of gay groups, the founding of a national gay newspaper, *Lampião de Esquina*, and in 1980 the first Brazilian Congress of Organized Homosexual Groups. Gays and lesbians cooperated closely and harmoniously with the rising black and women's movements. Cooperation with the socialist Left was more controversial, due in part to the anti-gay attitudes of pro-Soviet and pro-Albanian groups and in part to some gay leaders' blanket hostility to the Left; the issue caused a split in the gay-lesbian movement. But the new Workers Party (PT) worked well with the movement. Gays marched on May Day 1981 in a pro-PT contingent and PT candidates were elected with open gay-lesbian backing and explicitly pro-gay programmes. In one city, the PT municipal directorate and a local gay-lesbian group shared an office.⁴⁰ Conversely, the triumph of dictatorships has sometimes meant the destruction of fledgling gay-lesbian papers—as in Brazil after the 1964 coup—and whole movements, as with the Argentinian Homosexual Liberation Front in 1976. Some of this group's leaders fled to Brazil where they helped found the gay movement there later in the 1970s as the dictatorship slowly relinquished power.⁴¹

In Mexico, the international student demonstrations of 1968 were echoed by strong protests against the regime. The first gay activism and consciousness-raising followed not long after in 1971. By the late 1970s there was a vibrant gay-lesbian movement, with thousands taking part in gay-pride marches. Lesbian and gay organizations such as Lambda, Oikabeth and the Homosexual Revolutionary Action Front (FHAR) grew rapidly. Gay-lesbian activism was closely associated with solidarity with

⁴⁰ Green, 'The Brazilian Gay Liberation Movement', pp. 40–50; Trevisan, *Parasites in Paradise*, pp. 144, 152, 149.

⁴¹ Green and Asis, 'Gays and Lesbians', p. 5; Clarke, 'Brazil', *Rites*, September 1984, p. 12; Green, 'Feathers and Fists', p. 7; James Green, 'The Emergence of the Brazilian Gay Liberation Movement, 1977–1981', *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1994), pp. 39, 52.

El Salvador and—more problematically—with Cuba. The growth of feminism in the 1970s was crucial for the foundation of the first Mexican lesbian group in 1977. By 1982 the gay-lesbian movement linked up with the Marxist Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), which ran several lesbian and gay leaders as candidates in the elections that year.⁴²

Because less popular mobilization was involved in transitions from dictatorship to democracy in Latin American countries other than Brazil, the boost to gay-lesbian movements was not so marked. The groups that have re-emerged in Argentina and Uruguay since the fall of the dictatorships in 1983 have been embattled, particularly in Argentina because of the government's refusal to grant legal recognition. The fact that liberalization coincided with economic hard times may also have been a factor. The movement was re-established in Chile with the founding of the Homosexual Liberation Movement (MOVILH) in 1992. Also in 1992, Salvadoran lesbians with roots in the FMLN and an ongoing left identity took advantage of their country's partial liberalization to organize themselves.⁴³ The Left's prejudices have, however, often limited its convergence with gay-lesbian resistance. For example, in Argentina in 1973 right-wing posters linked the Marxist ERP to homosexuality and drug addiction, and the Left responded by chanting, 'We're not faggots, we're not junkies.' One can only imagine how a gay or lesbian participant must have felt on hearing this chant. There were undoubtedly other examples of left bigotry in this period.⁴⁴

In countries where gay-lesbian communities are young and economically precarious, poor economic conditions can also slow gay-lesbian organization. For example, hyper-inflation in Argentina in 1974-75 made economic survival a higher priority than activism for all but a small core of the formerly flourishing movement. Worsening economic conditions were also probably a factor when the movement went into decline in Mexico in 1982. Most lesbians and gay men, suffering from poverty, pervasive prejudice and increasingly AIDS, were not drawn to a very public, politicized—and internally divided—movement. When activists abandoned their political groups for activities in a lower key, oriented towards social service, they were in part responding to pressure from lesbians and gay men. Although marches and cultural events have continued to take place and some lesbian groups have continued with political work—the national lesbian feminist coordinating group had eight regional affiliates in 1991—there was virtually no gay male political work in Mexico at the beginning of the 1990s.⁴⁵ The Brazilian movement went into a decline at about the same time as the Mexican, though it was not so precipitous, probably due to a similar combination of hard times and AIDS. A revival came later in the 1980s. Ten strong gay groups remained active early in 1992, and the movement was far more united in supporting the PT in

⁴² Lumsden, *Homosexuality, Society and the State*, pp. 60, 63-5, PRT, 'Resolución', *Liberación Homosexual*, p. 22; Yan María Castro, 'For a Free and Conscious Sexuality', *International Vespertine*, no. 245, May 1993, pp. 27-8.

⁴³ Durand, 'Chili', p. 12; 'El Salvadoran Lesbian Group', p. 1.

⁴⁴ 'Shrouded in Silence' (1982), *Coming Out*, p. 75.

⁴⁵ Green, 'Feathers and Fists', pp. 9-10, Lumsden, *Homosexuality, Society and the State*, pp. 64-6; Mark Chesnut, 'We are all Small Groups', *Ruta* (Toronto), May 1991, p. 9; J. Falquet, 'Todas somos hermanas', *Bulletin des Archives Lesbennes*, February 1991, p. 25.

1994 than in the early 1980s. In Puerto Rico, gay political organizing largely gave way to AIDS services by the mid-1980s.⁴⁶

Even in the midst of the global crisis, gay-lesbian organization in the Third World has continued to advance but, as new groups formed, beginning in the late 1980s, their character changed. After a decade in which Latin America was the continent for Third World gay-lesbian organizing, Asia emerged as another major area of activity. Even more important, lesbian groups have been more prominent than in the 1970s. Several factors may have contributed to this shift. Economically, women have increased their role outside the home relative to men, by moving, for example, into assembly plants in Southeast Asia and into the 'informal sector' in Latin America. Ideologically, as the Left retreated in the 1980s, feminism and the women's movement proved more resilient. New lesbian-feminist groups have emerged in Thailand, Indonesia, Taiwan and India, sometimes provoking major discussions in feminist organizations such as the Forum Against Women's Oppression in Bombay.

The most brutal factor in precipitating change has been AIDS, which killed a number of gay male leaders of the 1970s or turned their attention away from politics—at least as they used to define it. To the extent that gay men have been organizing in the Third World since the mid-1980s, AIDS and AIDS-inspired repression have been the most forceful stimuli. In Costa Rica, for example, the AIDS crisis and ensuing raids on gay bars, mandatory testing, and the murders of several gay men in 1987 provoked a wave of organizing and the establishment of the country's first gay-lesbian organizations. AIDS has also prompted the formation of the first gay-lesbian organizations in Guatemala (1989) and Malaysia (1987); Action for AIDS in Singapore (founded 1989) and the Fraternity for AIDS Cessation in Thailand (founded the same year) were the first largely gay public organizations in their countries; and safer-sex workshops enabled the originally predominantly white Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (founded in 1990) to make contact with an informal black gay network.⁴⁷

Another recent breakthrough for gay-lesbian organizing took place in black townships in South Africa, in the wake of the 1976 Soweto uprising. The issue of gay-lesbian rights came to the fore in 1984 when one of several African National Congress members on trial for their lives, Simon Nkoli, was revealed to be gay. This provoked a split in the South African gay-lesbian movement. Anti-apartheid gay-lesbian groups such as the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) and the Organization for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA) were founded, and

⁴⁶ Green, 'Feathers and Fists', pp. 26, 17; Green, 'The Brazilian Gay Liberation Movement', p. 51; Chauvin, 'A Key Decade', p. 10; Negrón-Muntaner, 'Thirty Years', p. 51.

⁴⁷ Jacob Schifter Sikoca, *La Formación de una Contracultura: Homosexualismo y Sida en Costa Rica*, San José 1989; *Outlines* (Chicago), vol. 3, no. 7 (1989), p. 13; Anne Walderhaug, 'Oostertse homobeweging door aids in de lift', *De Gay Krant* (Amsterdam), no. 179, 18 May 1991; Eric Allyn, 'Japan and Thailand Experience Surge in Gay Identity', *Passport* (San Francisco), no. 39, December 1990-January 1991, pp. 17-18; Coutinho, 'Black Gay Life', *BGM*, no. 6 (1991), p. 22. Admittedly, organizing around AIDS under more or less authoritarian regimes has been fairly low-key and not as openly sex-radical or socialist as the Latin American movements of the 1970s.

in 1990 the United Democratic Front admitted OLGA as an affiliate. The ANC's support for gay-lesbian rights is now reflected in the new South African constitution. Rapid change and cultural and class tensions led in 1992 to the formation of the new group Abigale, whose members saw themselves as more black and working-class than OLGA's and worked closely with the ANC in Khayelitsha township near Cape Town. Even so, the rapid changes in South Africa continue to raise questions about the direction of both the ANC and the gay-lesbian movement.⁴⁸

International Solidarity

It is clear that gay-lesbian liberation in the Third World is not an 'export product of the imperialist countries'. The general rise of the Latin American Left in the 1970s and the threat of AIDS and AIDS-related repression since the 1980s have been at least as important as any European or North American influence. But it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the autonomous development of gay-lesbian communities from strong influences from European, North American and Australasian gay-lesbian communities. Nevertheless, regional networking among Third World movements has been at least as important.

For centuries, the direct influence of imperialist countries on Third World sexuality took the forms of repression and domination which still continue today. But the rise of working-class and new social movements have made another kind of influence possible: solidarity between movements in the advanced capitalist countries and movements in the Third World. This solidarity 'piggybacks' in an odd way on the strong cultural influence that imperialist cultures have on Third World cultures. Since 1969, developments in European or North American gay-lesbian movements have often had an extraordinarily rapid, if more or less diluted, influence on their Third World equivalents. The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and International Lesbian Information Secretariat (ILIS), both composed and run largely by lesbians and gay men in the advanced capitalist countries, have contributed to the growth of Third World movements by carrying out solidarity actions, sending materials and money, and 'twinning' richer and poorer groups. Yet sometimes their vision and solidarity have had limits, as when the 1985 ILGA conference in Toronto rejected a resolution supporting Third World national liberation movements.

Solidarity expressed through the international feminist movement has been significant for the development of Third World lesbian movements: for example, at the UN Women's Decade Conference in Nairobi in 1985. Lesbians from ILIS began discussing the Nairobi conference in April 1984, formulated demands, brought four thousand pamphlets and five hundred magazines there, set up a lesbian stand, and held a lesbian caucus each day. The workshops they organized were packed, attracting women from 120 countries. Several times in these workshops a Kenyan woman got up to say, 'In our country it does not exist'—and other Kenyan women

⁴⁸ Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', in *Defiant Desire*, pp. 68–9, 55–8, 75–7; McLean and Ngcobo, 'Abangibhamayo bathi ngumnandi', in *Defiant Desire*, p. 180; Woods, 'Abigale's Party', *Gay Times*, April 1993, pp. 64–5.

would shout, 'Yes it does! Yes it does!' Kenyan lesbians thus gained an opportunity to make themselves visible they had not had before.⁴⁹

Over the years, though, interaction among Third World movements has become at least as important as connections to advanced capitalist countries. Regional gay-lesbian and women's gatherings, particularly in Latin America and Asia, have become a key mechanism spurring gay-lesbian organizing. For isolated individuals or small groups in particular countries, the support of a large regional network has often been essential. The ILIS Geneva conference in 1986, following the 1985 Nairobi conference, was the first to have lesbians attending from five continents. It provided an occasion for six women to begin plans for an Asian Lesbian Network, which held its first conference in December 1990 in Bangkok. Asian gay conferences in 1986, 1988 and 1990 also helped consolidate the wave of Asian organizing.⁵⁰ Several Latin American lesbian groups were founded in the wake of a lesbian workshop at the second Latin American Feminist Gathering in Lima in 1983, including a lesbian group in Chile. Together with the 1986 ILIS conference, the Lima Gathering provided the impetus for Latin American and Caribbean Lesbian Gatherings in 1987, 1990 and 1992. Salvadoran lesbians credited the 1992 gathering in Managua with inspiring them to found their Salvadoran group. A gathering of Latin American gay-lesbian groups took place later in 1992. Gay-lesbian movements in the Third World have sometimes been spurred onwards by compatriots returning from advanced capitalist countries or helped by immigrants in North America or Europe who have organized in solidarity with them. The 1987 Latin American lesbian gathering was funded in part by a California gay-lesbian Latino group, for example, while the first two gay-lesbian South Asian organizations were founded in 1985-86 in the North American diaspora and spread back to India.⁵¹

Gays and Revolution: Cuba

Although gay-lesbian movements leaned strongly toward socialism as they emerged in the Third World in the 1970s, Soviet and Chinese influence fuelled anti-gay prejudice on the Left. The Bolshevik regime's inconsistently tolerant policies of the 1920s—decriminalizing same-sex sexual activity, publishing homoerotic literary works, supporting the

⁴⁹ Sylvia Borten, 'Lesbians in Nairobi', *Second ILGA Pink Book: A Global View of Lesbian and Gay Liberation and Oppression*, Interfacultaire Werkgroep Homostudies, Utrecht 1988, pp. 60-5, 'United Nations Women's Decade Conference. The Decade has been Good for us' (1985), *Coming Out*, pp. 291-2.

⁵⁰ Borten, 'Lesbians in Nairobi', p. 66; *ALN Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1991), p. 4. The 1986 and 1988 conferences, held in Tokyo, had minimal participation from outside Japan. See Teishiro Minami, 'The 2nd Gay Asian Conference', *Asian Wind*, no. 5, 25 Dec. 1988, p. 1.

⁵¹ Shelly Anderson, *Out in the World: International Lesbian Organizing*, Ithaca 1991, p. 31; Catherine Gonnard and Claire Lefebvre, 'Au pays de la dictature', *Lesbis Magazine*, no. 76, Oct. 1989, p. 15; Green and Asia, 'Gays and Lesbians', p. 7; 'El Salvadoran Lesbian Group', p. 1. Irving, 'First Latin American conference', *River*, September 1987, p. 12; Ratti, 'Introduction', *A Lotus of Another Color*, p. 12. Arab gay-lesbian groups have also formed in the US, but so far there are no reports of their linking up with gay-lesbian organizing in the Arab world. Theorists and leaders of gay-lesbian liberation who have spent time in the US include Juan Jacobo Hernández of Mexico, Dédi Oetomo of Indonesia, Jacobo Schifter Sikora of Costa Rica, Natee Teenarajjanapongs of Thailand and João Trevisan of Brazil.

World League for Sexual Reform—had given way by 1934 to recriminalization and persecution,³² and the Chinese revolution had brought an unremittingly anti-lesbian and anti-gay regime to power. Communist and Maoist parties around the world propagated anti-gay attitudes, and many leftist currents in the Third World that were not pro-Soviet or Maoist unthinkingly took up the anti-gay tradition.

The Cuban revolution, given its importance for revolutionaries all over Latin America, has played a particularly negative role in associating the Left with the persecution of lesbians and gays. US imperialism played a role here, not only through pre-revolutionary sex tourism which reinforced anti-gay prejudice among Cuban revolutionaries, but through backing a counter-revolutionary fifth column in Cuba in the early 1960s, which ensured that 'private space was invaded as never before'. The Soviet Union and Stalinist Popular Socialist Party also helped to fuel anti-gay attitudes. After a certain point, however, the Castro regime's attacks on gays as counter-revolutionary became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Even gay people who had backed the revolution found themselves pushed toward ties with the anti-Castro underground because it was one of the few places to escape the repression and isolation.³³

The height of the regime's persecution came when gays were rounded up into the UMAP camps in 1965. Although these camps were closed in 1967, other anti-gay measures followed in the 1970s: lesbians and gay men were purged from teaching, delegations abroad, the foreign ministry and the medical profession. CP membership remains officially impossible for lesbians and gay men, although a play by openly gay CP member Senel Paz opened in Havana in 1992. A saying among Cuban lesbians and gay men today is reputedly, 'Say nothing, do everything.' Some observers report finding a substantial gay-lesbian community there,³⁴ but the regime's AIDS policy from the late 1980s of quarantining everyone who tests positive for the HIV virus—a policy that may prove wrong-headed from a public-health standpoint—has had a chilling effect. Even so, official educational materials about AIDS have adopted a neutral tone about homosexuality that was rare earlier.³⁵

Gays and the Nicaraguan Revolution

Nicaragua, by contrast, provides a somewhat more positive example.

³² John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864–1935)*, New York 1974; Simon Karlinsky, 'Russia's Gay Literature and Culture. The Impact of the October Revolution', in *Hidden from History*, pp. 347–64.

³³ Argüelles and Rich, 'Homosexuality, Homophobia and Revolution', *Hidden from History*, pp. 447–8. In *Gays under the Cuban Revolution*, Young concludes from the PSP's role that anti-gay repression in revolutionary Cuba was due to 'the external tradition of European Marxism'.

³⁴ Argüelles and Rich, 'Homosexuality, Homophobia and Revolution', *Hidden from History*, pp. 448, 451, 455; Young, *Gays under the Cuban Revolution*, pp. 19, 27, 28; Henk van den Boogaard and Kathelijne van Kuppen, 'We Cannot Jump Over our own Shadow', *Coming Out*, pp. 86, 89, 92; André Reeder, 'Cuba: revolutie voor homo's', *XL* (Amsterdam), vol. 1, no. 7 (1992), p. 17; Margaret Randall, 'To Change our Reality and the World. A Conversation with Lesbians in Nicaragua', *Signs* (Chicago), vol. 18, no. 4 (1993), p. 916.

³⁵ Reeder, 'Cuba', *XL*, vol. 1, no 7 (1992), p. 17.

Pre-revolutionary Nicaragua was typical of Latin American patterns of sexuality in many ways. On the one hand, there was a transgendered tradition of *locas* who did 'women's work', expressed for example in the traditional annual parade of men in drag in the centre of national folklore, Masaya. On the other hand, US sex tourism—on a very small scale—and male prostitution existed in a few bars in Managua, an 'immense, sprawling rural town' with hardly any gay scene.⁵⁶ Suspicion towards an apparently old-fashioned transgendered sexuality in the Nicaraguan countryside and towards the sometimes exploitative sexuality found in the bars of Managua pushed the FSLN toward anti-gay attitudes, which were particularly in evidence during the Sandinista government's first years. There was pressure while the FSLN was in office to avoid public discussion of same-sex eroticism or public self-identification by lesbian and gay FSLN militants. A gay-lesbian 'group of reflection and action' which was formed in 1985, including FSLN members and others doing military service, broke up under pressure from the interior ministry in 1987.⁵⁷

However, US anti-interventionists' solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution was clearly crucial to its survival, a fact that gave them influence on both the FSLN and Nicaraguan gays. A number of lesbians and gay men in the US managed to combine support for the revolution with insistence on their own visibility, for example by taking part in the gay-lesbian Victoria Mercado Brigade from San Francisco in 1984. Combined with the efforts of lesbian and gay Nicaraguan leftists, who took courage from the end of Somocista repression, Sandinista conflict with the Catholic hierarchy, and the new regime's efforts to encourage women's equality and independence, US gay-lesbian solidarity had an impact. The rise of a US movement against AIDS about the time that the disease appeared in Nicaragua created an opening for the fledgling gay-lesbian movement. In 1988 lesbians and gay men organized an AIDS collective with support from the ministry of health. In 1989 they marched openly as a contingent in the revolution's tenth anniversary celebration.⁵⁸

Gay-lesbian activism continued after the rise to power of the US-backed, sexually traditionalist Chamorro government in 1990, despite repressive measures and the withdrawal of funding. The Sandinistas' fall from power even created somewhat more freedom to debate differences inside the FSLN and question the imperatives of 'national unity'. One lesbian FSLN activist said, 'When we lost the election... that's when I began to *have* a personal life.'⁵⁹ A lesbian feminist collective, Nosotras, formed in 1991. In June 1991 three hundred men and women came to the country's first public gay-lesbian pride celebration, though it was attacked by both Radio Católica and Sandinista Radio Ya—prompting a women's

⁵⁶ Guadalupe Sequera Malespén and Javier Antino Berrios Cruz, *Investigación sobre la situación lesbica homosexual en el Norte, Centro y Costa del Pacífico de Nicaragua*, unpublished manuscript 1993, p. 5; Soudet Cuadra, 'Lesbians and Gays in Nicaragua: Coming Out of the Closet', *Barricada Internacional*, August 1991, p. 32; Barry D. Adam, 'In Nicaragua: Homosexuality Without a Gay World', *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 24, nos. 3-4 (1993), pp. 172-3.

⁵⁷ Cuadra, 'Lesbians and Gays', pp. 32-3; Randall, 'To Change our Reality', pp. 911-13.

⁵⁸ Sequera and Berrios, *Investigación*, p. 4; Randall, 'To Change our Reality', pp. 912-14; Cuadra, 'Lesbians and Gays', pp. 32-3.

⁵⁹ Randall, 'To Change our Reality', p. 921.

march on Radio Ya. In León and Managua, departmental FSLN congresses passed resolutions that 'no member of the FSLN shall be discriminated against for his or her sexual orientation'. Every FSLN member of the National Assembly voted against the Chamorro government's proposal in 1992 for a new anti-gay law—which nonetheless passed.⁶⁰ While the Nicaraguan gay-lesbian movement is very much on the defensive, it has given an important new example of linkage between gay-lesbian liberation and anti-imperialist revolution.

Toward Gay-Lesbian Liberation in the Third World

Third World lesbians and gay men have unique problems with which to wrestle. They cannot simply follow the path that European and North American movements have mapped out, yet they may have a unique potential to participate in the social transformation of their countries. They can learn from the reciprocal forms prevalent in European and North American gay-lesbian communities, without mimicking European and North American gays in building fully fledged gay ghettos or in marginalizing diverse sexualities. Third World lesbians and gay men can make their own, distinctive contributions to gay-lesbian liberation. In the words of two South Africans: 'From the "developed" world we inherit notions of sexual freedom and gay subculture; from the "developing world" we gain the imperatives of struggle, resistance, and social transformation.'⁶¹

What possibility is there for masses of people in the Third World to experience same-sex eroticism freely, outside the constraints of both anti-gay repression and capitalist sexual exploitation? Lesbians and gay men can experience a considerable degree of freedom in the richest countries of Western Europe, despite the ghettoization, gender and family constraints, and all-pervasive heterosexual hegemony that exist there. But this kind of freedom depends on a level of economic development that is beyond the reach of Third World countries under capitalism, at least in the current time of global economic crisis.

Given the rapid growth of gay-lesbian movements in the Third World in the past decade, if new left breakthroughs do occur in the Third World, the prospect of their linking up with gay-lesbian liberation movements seems possible. For the majority of lesbians and gay men in the Third World, successful opposition to capitalism probably offers the best hope for the near future of loosening the constraints on their sexuality. True, any social transformation that remains limited to the Third World will inevitably contend with poverty; and poverty cruelly limits sexual freedom in various ways. Housing is necessary to free people, particularly women, from dependence on their families, and give gay-lesbian relationships the space they require. Good jobs are necessary to avoid making the sex trade the only option for many gay youths. Public child-care programmes are necessary for lesbians and gays to participate

⁶⁰ J. Falquet, 'Le retour des vieux démons', *Lesbia Magazine* (Paris), no. 108, September 1992, pp. 30-1; Joan Arkin, 'Majority Rules', *Rise* (Toronto), April 1991, p. 11; Cuadras, 'Lesbians and Gays', p. 33; Randall, 'To Change our Reality', p. 908, n. 4.

⁶¹ Gevisser and Cameron, 'Introduction', in *Defiant Desire*, p. 5.

equally in child-rearing. Massive health-care funding is necessary in order to deal with AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases. The internal redistribution of wealth is unlikely to provide any Third World country with all these necessary resources without massive aid from governments in the richer countries. Without them, only limited steps toward gay-lesbian liberation are possible.

Yet even within these limits, Third World gay-lesbian movements could make important contributions to revolutionary processes, contributions that could materially improve lesbians' and gay men's lives in their own countries and inspire lesbian and gay men elsewhere. Even in a country as poor and isolated as Nicaragua, gay people's lives are different because a revolution took place; and the solidarity of North American and European lesbians and gay men at least helped the movement contend with the constraints of poverty. Revolutions in countries that are larger, more industrialized and urbanized, and that already have gay-lesbian movements would have correspondingly greater possibilities. They could take measures that not only would increase sexual freedom but would serve as transitions in the long run to full gay-lesbian liberation, inasmuch as they would have to challenge both pre-capitalist forms of sexuality, with their rigid gender and kinship systems, and capitalist sexuality, with its fetishized categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality.

The vision of gay-lesbian liberation in each country will be developed out of its movement's own experiences, and through dialogue among different currents. But the most fruitful approaches to gay-lesbian liberation will probably be those that combine sexual radicalism with coalition-building, link gay-lesbian demands with strategies for broader social transformation, and build unitary left organizations alongside independent lesbian and gay groups. Left opposition to repression and discrimination, and left support for self-organization by oppressed people are the keys. True, there are risks for the Left in being associated with this issue, particularly in Third World countries where gay-lesbian movements are often very weak and prejudice is pervasive. But the risks are far greater of the Left's being left behind as gay-lesbian movements develop and move forward in the Third World, as they are doing and will do.

Spectres of the Aesthetic

Questions on art which were once seen as overloaded with liberal sentiment are now being taken seriously by the philosophical Left in the English-speaking world. At the heart of this swirl of revision and revival, art is being employed by aesthetic discourse to re-examine questions of subjectivity, judgement, freedom and truth. In a critical response to the widely perceived crisis of political and artistic values, these writers aim to reinvigorate the philosophical question of value through the conjunction of ethics and aesthetics. We want to argue, however, that the ethical content of aesthetics is secured in this instance by the actual diminishment of value, particularly in relation to the pleasures of the body and the problems of contemporary art. Like Odysseus strapped to the mast, the aestheticized body obtains its delights by immobilizing, restricting and denying itself. In other words, by stressing a certain aspect of the experience of art, the new writing on aesthetics suppresses the critique of the categories of art that have occurred this century, but also suppresses art as a *practical* category of living and contested culture. One of our concerns, therefore, is to

trace how aesthetics *constitutes* those things—art and the body—which it claims to describe. To this end, we argue that the recent revival of the philosophy of aesthetics contributes to the deeper failure of aesthetics to register what would count as culture and pleasure in its pursuit of art and judgement. Indeed, to do this would involve connecting such pleasures to those who are manifestly excluded from the tastes and privileges of this world of judgement. Thus we seek to take the philosophical defence of what it considers to be pleasure out of the realms of ethical abstraction and make it concrete through the demands of precisely those bodies that are suppressed by the philosophy of aesthetics: the philistine and the voluptuous.

Our contention is that the body in the philosophy of aesthetics is emptied of the contingencies and conflicts of the everyday: those quotidian pleasures and brutalities produced by the functions, experiences and encounters of the commodified body. Inextricably linked to this, we argue, is a conception of art which is unduly protected from cultural division and the mundanity of culture as such. In other words, there is a tendency to treat art as inestimably worthy, noble or even as being among the greatest preoccupations of humanity, rather than as a series of ruminations and trouble-spots. It is this very question, the question of art's benevolence, which is the core absence of the central concern of the new philosophic writing: the neo-Romantic defence of truth and freedom *through* art.

The New Aestheticism

Arguments about emancipation and non-instrumental versions of truth *as being prefigured in art*, are usually associated—rightly or wrongly—with the Right and with the liberal tradition. What is significant about the new writing on aesthetics—hereafter, the new aestheticism—is that it reclaims aesthetics for the Left without any sense of ideological compromise with the Right. In this there is a clear continuity with an older Marxist tradition of aesthetic thinking, specifically that of Herbert Marcuse and Theodore Adorno. Like Marcuse and Adorno, the new aestheticism turns to art and aesthetics as a source of transcendental ethics, an ethics that commits the individual to a form of responsibility that cannot be reduced to abiding by the law. Marcuse and Adorno are, of course, famous for their political absenteeism, but this was partly predicated on their unswerving conviction that culture is political through and through. For the new aestheticism, on the other hand, what is attractive about aesthetics is that it seems to offer ethics, truth and freedom as the very embodiment and result of non-partisanship. This defence of aesthetics as an ethically displaced politics is judged to be transcendently emancipatory. We argue, however, that claims to liberation through art are impossible without the categories, forms and agencies of the partisan. The truth of partisanship is not blind to its own interests but acts as a corrective to what are enforced as universal interests. The critical categories we adopt at the end of this essay—the philistine, the practical and the voluptuous—are suggestive of the means by which the truth of partisanship can be given specific form in debates about aesthetics.

Our defence of art as a cultural category against the unreflective exclusions of the new aestheticism turns on how we understand the concept of artis-

tic autonomy. In arguing against the conventional idea that the autonomy of art means its isolation from everything else, we will make space for the partisan. This is because to think of autonomy as non-partisan is to figure the relation between the particular and universal as already reconciled. To affirm art's autonomy without drawing attention to the power of art's institutions in constituting art as a category is a failure to extricate the question of autonomy from the constraints of the studio, the gallery, the magazine and so forth. The new aestheticists are complicit with this failure insofar as their defence of art's autonomy is blinded by their illicit fission of art and cultural life, their refusal to see art as a cultural category. Our use of the term 'blindness' here is not adventitious. Kantian aesthetics speaks of blindness, such as the insensitivity of the philistine, but it may also be considered as itself blind, in its inability to acknowledge the diversity of bodily pleasure and approaches to art. Thus, whereas the new aestheticism might speak of the 'blindness to aesthetics'¹ as a reproach to the (would-be) philistinism of the Left, the philistine is entitled to turn round and speak of the blindness of aesthetics, accusing it of abstinence, idleness and a hatred of the body intoxicated, surrendered and seduced. To talk of a blindness to aesthetics, then, is to mystify the function of aesthetics since Kant, amounting to a sort of cognitive blindness, to the suppression of bodily wants and needs in the name of a disinterested form of judgement and experience. This sense of aesthetics as being blind to its own blindnesses also forms the shared terrain of the various post-Kantian attacks on aesthetic philosophy. From Hegel and Heidegger to Pierre Bourdieu and Paul de Man, the post-aesthetic tradition has taken aesthetic judgement to be a kind of self-confirming myopia.² Two traditions face each other, blindness facing blindness without independent arbitration. But rather than plump for one, we want to play them off against each other, insisting that neither aesthetics nor its critique can go on living apart as if nothing was out of place. The alternative is not to be blind to both or not blind at all, but rather to begin from the assumption that blindness is constitutive of cultural experience. These are the spectres of the aesthetic.

Aesthetics and the Left

The onlooker to this intellectual drama may experience a certain sense of déjà vu. The return to aesthetics has become almost a regular occurrence in philosophical, cultural and political history. The history of the Left and Marxism itself is punctuated with fundamentalist and heterodox revaluations of art and sensuousness. Although the new aestheticism thinks of itself as largely reclaiming aesthetics from the Right, there is a modern and pre-modern history of the Left's engagement with aesthetic experience; one can think of the writings of William Morris, Oscar Wilde, E.P. Thompson (particularly his critique of Althusser), Meyer Schapiro, Leon Trotsky, and also Gerald Winstanley—whose opposition

¹ Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*, Manchester 1990, p. 1.

² G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, trans. T.M. Knox, Oxford 1975; Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, London 1971; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, trans. Richard Nice, London 1984; Pierre Bourdieu, Alan Darbel and Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, trans. C. Beattie and N. Merriman, Cambridge 1991; Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, New York 1984, and *The Resistance to Theory*, Minnesota 1986.

to authority through a defence of the five senses is surprisingly germane. Naturally, one 'reads' each return or reworking as related in some way to the others. It is a mistake, however, to treat such shifts of attention as iterations, to think that to have an opinion about, say, the cultural debates of the seventies and the thirties, or *Tel Quel*, is to have an opinion about any subsequent returns to aesthetics. It would be right, therefore, to give historical substance to this sense of déjà vu, so long as it is clear that this does not mean that the repeated return to aesthetics carries the same assumptions. Each return resituates the aesthetic debate under different political and intellectual circumstances. In this respect, the new aestheticism is correct to speak of the blindness of the Left to aesthetics *not* because their rupture is unique, but precisely because the tradition of aesthetics on the Left is a broken and intermittent one. Given this, we need to recognize that the new aestheticism speaks of the Left's blindness after a period in which the Left's attitude to aesthetics has not been of simple neglect but of aggressive suspicion and denunciation. In the seventies and early eighties, structuralist Marxism, the feminist critique of autonomous individuality, and the development of an anti-colonialist cultural politics decisively transformed the discussion of aesthetics into a discussion of ideology. In some quarters, aesthetics became confined to a caricatured realm of Romanticism. As a liberating rupture within the Left, this post-'68 critique of art and aesthetics is the revolutionary spectre that still haunts aesthetics as a philosophical category. As such, it shadows their confident endorsement of the political crisis of this cultural critique. This takes us on to broader considerations.

Anyone who has taken an interest in the new aestheticism over the past few years will no doubt have speculated on the wider political reasons for the Left's return to aesthetics. There are a number of apparently compelling candidates, although the fact that they are obvious does not make them causally efficacious. These are the crisis of Marxism and the collapse of the Eastern European regimes and the Soviet Union, the rise of post-structuralism and Derridean deconstruction (which, by attacking the metaphysics of presence and by overtly textualizing philosophic activity, have transformed philosophic writing *into* the work of aesthetic, self-reflexive display), and the disappointment with postmodernism's bureaucratization of art's critique of itself. Because these things have occurred does not mean that other things will necessarily follow in their wake, but the meanings that these events are taken to possess have provided an opportunity for the legitimization of subsequent choices. Nevertheless, even though the causal consequences of such events is uncertain, we can at least be sure of one causal factor in the development of the new aestheticism: the publication of the first English translation of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* in 1984.³ Since then, there has been a growing assessment of the importance of Adorno for the recovery of the aesthetic debate. Adorno is seen as the only major thinker of the Western philosophic tradition to keep faith with the paradox of aesthetic autonomy as a theatre of ethical address. For Adorno, the paradox of aesthetic autonomy lies in the fact that, although art is marginal and commodified, it is only art which is capable of providing an immanent critique of instrumental reason. The growth of literature on aesthetics by the English-speaking Left through

³ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt, London 1984

the late eighties and early nineties is due largely to the assimilation of Adorno on these terms. In the process, there has been a reassessment of the philosophic tradition out of which the aesthetic as an ethical category has been made. The reading of Adorno has also involved the re-reading of Kant, the German Romantics, Hegel and Heidegger. Since 1990—which is coming to appear as a threshold date—there has been a widespread consolidation of the idea that Adorno is the conscience of our political and aesthetic crisis, not only in philosophy but literary theory, art history and art criticism. The philosophic writing of Jay Bernstein, Andrew Bowie, Peter Osborne, the literary theory of Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton and Mike Sprinker, and the art history and art criticism of T.J. Clark, Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, have all contributed to this emergent literature—although Harrison and Wood rarely address Adorno directly. Now, this is not to construct some fledgling school, but to identify a generally acknowledged point of departure for a diversity of writers on the Left. Furthermore, this could be said to rest on a shared sense of identification on the part of the writers about the need to renegotiate their own inheritance and previous convictions within a transformed political culture. Speculations about such individual motivations may remain empirically weak, but they have a certain intuitive clarity.

In 1990 three books were published that formed the opening shots of what has become the new aestheticism: Terry Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Fredric Jameson's *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic*, and Andrew Bowie's *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*.⁴ Eagleton's book, in particular, represented something of a publishing event, garnering a great deal of attention for its intimations of deep changes underway in the Left's relationship to its own aesthetic past. Both Eagleton and Jameson attend to the problem of the aesthetic through Adorno's remorseless insistence on the intractable contradictoriness of every aspect of everyday life. This is why the ruling figure of Eagleton's book is the oxymoron, and this is what leads him to equivocation on the status of the aesthetic. This is also why the idea of totality is so important to Jameson, for he seeks to implicate art in social conflict by following the Adornian principle that all abstract philosophical questions are fundamentally historical ones. Bowie, on the other hand, does not treat aesthetics as re-enacting social contradictions, but rather takes the 'paradox' of the aesthetic as the starting point for the aesthetic grounding of the ethics. And this is what we see as the overriding project of the new aestheticism. We want to focus our attention initially on Bowie, then, because, regardless of these authors' shared cultural terrain, it is his theory of aesthetic subjectivity that introduces and elaborates many of the assumptions, values and aspirations of the Left's current rethinking of aesthetics.

Art and Human Autonomy

Although *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* covers the same historical and philosophical ground as Eagleton—Kant, the German Romantics, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger—Bowie uses extensive and detailed historical

⁴ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Oxford 1990; Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism. Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic*, Verso, London 1990

research to overcome what he sees as omissions in contemporary philosophy—particularly those pertaining to subjectivity and aesthetics. In a re-reading of 'early Romanticism' he argues for the reinstatement of the ontological primacy of the subject, the subject as producer of new values and meanings out of the will to an aesthetically conceived process of self-transformation. In this Bowie has two primary philosophical targets: the elaboration of the subject as an effect of textuality in post-structuralism, and the de-agentification of human action and the privileging of conceptual reason within the Hegelian–Marxist tradition. So Bowie takes his distance from those approaches to art and aesthetics that would either seek to explain creativity in terms of its inscription within ideology, or reduce the wider meanings of art to the content of objective necessities and natural regularities. This is, no doubt, a good intuition; however, in order to defend the subject as creative and self-transforming, Bowie ends up promoting art as the highest embodiment of human autonomy. Crucial to this is his account of music, a model of which he finds in early Romanticism. More than any other artistic activity, music reveals for him the impossibility of understanding subjectivity through theoretical articulation. The non-representational orders of what Bowie terms 'autonomous music'—that is, music without words—are taken as evidence of the irreducibility of self-consciousness to critical reflection. What remains important about such music therefore is that, in presenting the 'Unsayable', it escapes the would-be omnipotence of conceptual reason with unparalleled charm and delight. In Bowie's terms, to understand the textures of Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto* as a representation of the composer's melancholy would mean very little.

The whole debate on subjectivity, Bowie contends, has become mired in historical confusions and misrepresentations. Tracing the debates on aesthetics since Kant as debates on the subject, he recovers what he sees as a 'lost' materialist concept of the *pre-reflexive* self. On this view, pre-reflexivity is ontologically prior because consciousness, or subjectivity, is taken to be prior to reflection. It is only because there is such a thing as consciousness that consciousness can reflect on itself. He views this conception of pre-reflexivity as the neglected legacy of Fichte and Novalis, but most particularly of F.D.E. Schleiermacher (1768–1834). A largely forgotten figure within the Anglo-American reception of German philosophy, Schleiermacher is the key to Bowie's book.⁵ Schleiermacher's philosophy is characterized by a refusal to give a dominant methodological role to scientific reason and the absolute. Any systematic approach to thought, he asserts, must acknowledge and include a conception of self-transformative discovery. Or, to put it another way, because the *activity* of the will is involved in all processes of scientific discovery and analysis, the process of reasoning necessarily entails a moment of free productivity irreducible to given theoretical guidelines: this is the moment of pre-reflexive creativity. What interests Bowie is that Schleiermacher has a theory of knowledge and subjectivity that positions the free productivity of human agency, of aesthetic life, at the centre of philosophical activity. What is persuasive for Bowie is Schleiermacher's suggestion that consciousness may be a product of such things as sign systems, but it can

⁵ F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Hermeneutic Manuscripts*, trans. James Duke and Jack Forstman, Missoula 1977

never be a function of those systems. Schleiermacher thus provides extended support for Bowie's critique of textualism. Given this, the pre-reflexive conception of consciousness as free production appears to Bowie a far better ontological candidate than post-structuralist or deconstructivist views for a political reading of aesthetics. This is because to theorize consciousness as free production grounded in pre-reflexive unity is to hold onto that assumed moment of free particularity in art that enables art to sustain itself against incorporation into discursive reason. *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* is a defence of the *autonomy* of aesthetics from instrumental reason as a defence of the subject from the encroachments of barbaric forces. In a climate where theories of the subject are seen to be a late twentieth-century development, Bowie's aim is to 'prevent the repetition of problems which already have a history'.⁶ As such, to have an adequate account of aesthetics means having an adequate historical account of subjectivity. Bowie's substantive aim, therefore, is nothing short of a general redescription of the philosophical field as the basis for a critique of what is taken to be the wholly inadequate account of aesthetics and subjectivity on the post-structuralist Left and within Marxism.

We will want to comment on the implications of Bowie's defence of art's autonomy and his conception of subjectivity later on. The difficulty in questioning his views is to avoid the bald restatement of those recent theories of subjectivity which he seeks to discredit and displace. The temptation is there, not because such theories are 'true', but because Bowie overlooks so much of the detail and substance of the question of subjectivity and its relations to aesthetics to bring about his central goal: the reinstatement of a 'lost', or disposed, sense of the internal unity and integrity of subjectivity *as such*.

Bernstein's 'Bereavement' of Art

In 1991, a collection of Adorno's essays on mass culture was published as *The Culture Industry*, edited and introduced by Jay Bernstein.⁷ In the following year Bernstein published *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*.⁸ Both books as confirmation of the importance of Adorno for the new aestheticism, the former as a resource to allow a more informed confrontation between Adorno's aesthetics and the claims of his detractors, and the latter as the most meticulous analysis of aesthetics since Adorno. We would even go as far to say that *The Fate of Art* establishes the programme of the new aestheticism, thereby appearing to retrospectively unify the work of Bowie, Eagleton and Jameson. The reason Bernstein is able to do this is because his book is an elaboration of the dialectical tensions within philosophical aesthetics which occurs in the border between instrumental reason and aesthetic autonomy. In Bowie this is elided or skirted in virtue of his notion of a pre-reflexive subjectivity. In Eagleton it is fudged as a consequence of his tendency to homogenize the diversity of aesthetic philosophy according to the 'law' of Adorno's aesthetic paradox. Similarly, Jameson never

⁶ Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, p. 114.

⁷ T.W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed J.M. Bernstein, London 1991.

⁸ J.M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*, London 1992.

reaches Bernstein's central question because he is concerned to defend the internal coherence of Adorno's texts, not their concrete substance. Having said this, Bernstein might also be accused of a little expedience, for his focus on the question of the constitution of aesthetics is also a reconfiguration of that question. Where for others the dialectical border of aesthetics might come up against other forms of culture (such as Bourdieu's sociological account of 'consecrated' and 'amateur' practices), or other discourses (such as the various social historians of art who entertain multiple perspectives on works), Bernstein figures the constitution of aesthetics cognitively. This places him within a broadly Kantian tradition, but like Bowie, in stressing the opposition between reason and aesthetics, he gives dominance to the category of the aesthetic.

Bernstein's *The Fate of Art* is orchestrated by the idea that art and philosophy complete one another. Because art's rewards are not reducible to knowledge, which in Bernstein's language is 'truth only cognition', it offers philosophy a means by which to conceive of the avoidance of the conceptual violation of particularity. If knowledge sacrifices particularity by subsuming individuals under general categories, then art avoids such violence. For instance, attending to a landscape painting does not typically turn on knowing anything about the place it depicts. Yet art does not ~~argue~~ for the particular against the general, it is precisely because it does not argue (at all) that art is *for* the particular against the general. Hence, art needs philosophy in order to articulate what it is and does but cannot explicate. As in Bowie, the trope of 'not-saying' or the 'unsayable' becomes paradigmatic for the philosophy of aesthetics. Aesthetic judgement is the curious result of not-knowing, of a special kind of certainty in the absence of certainty, of estimating a thing 'in its own right' while not knowing it. That is, having established that 'truth only cognition' subsumes particulars under concepts, subjecting things to laws, and so forth, the promise of aesthetics is that it judges things unconstrained by any knowledge of that which it apprehends. Thus, it is not *despite* not-knowing but *because* of not-knowing that aesthetic judgement is claimed to estimate things in their own right. This is an ethically inverted version of Kant's aesthetic judgement, for, whereas Kant believed that the subsumption of particulars under concepts was the foundation of liberty, Bernstein believes that liberty emerges out of the resistance to subsumption: 'The language of Kantian aesthetics is not simply different from the critical vocabulary of knowing and right action, but, despite Kant's intentions, raises a challenge to that vocabulary.'⁹

The precondition for this challenge is that it should be impossible to confuse the claims of aesthetics and the claims of reason. Bernstein states that, historically, the separation of these two types of claim occurred with the emergence of modernity. In identifying this, he adopts what is axiomatic for the philosophy of aesthetics: what Kant called autonomy, what Hegel called the end of art, what Heidegger saw as art's ontological lack of grounding, and what Adorno theorized as the paradox of art. Bernstein develops his own understanding of this sundering of aesthetics and reason in terms of 'fate', what he calls 'the alienation of art from truth'. Uncontroversially, Bernstein describes this 'aesthetic alienation'

⁹ Ibid, p. 8.

as a consequence of 'art's *becoming* aesthetic'. However, by figuring this event as a loss, and addressing it in terms of bereavement, he divides the post-aesthetic tradition in two. Although Kant's concept of autonomy confronts aesthetic alienation, he does not mourn it. For Kant, art's becoming aesthetic is an achievement of modernity insofar as it brings about art's self-determination. Similarly, Hegel's thesis of the end of art, despite its intimations of historical loss, is not fuelled by any nostalgia for a pre-modern lack of differentiation. Rather, he contends that because art under modernity can no longer exemplify any collective social and ethical role, its truth claims are now subsumed and superseded by philosophy. For Hegel, art no longer provides the best means of navigating the modern world.¹⁰ Unlike Kant and Hegel, however, Heidegger's conception of the alienation of art figures a hoped-for reconciliation with the 'ground' of the pre-modern. This is because, for Heidegger, art's crisis of meaning encapsulates a specific falling away from an originary moment of authenticity—ancient Greek culture—where, he argues, perception of sensuous particularity was not mediated by the alienating category of the aesthetic.¹¹ Heidegger's post-aesthetic philosophy of art, then, sets up a fundamental contrast with the Kantian tradition. For Heidegger, the experience of art is of necessity shot through with the trauma of historical and communal loss. In his account of the paradox of art, Adorno likewise, accepts the vocabulary of this trauma, but his theory of the alienation of art combines Heidegger's sense of loss with Hegel's sense of historical irreversibility to give Kant's conception of autonomy a dystopian character. And it is this remarkably heterodox treatment of art's alienation in Adorno that gives rise to the ethical ambitions which Bernstein, and the new aestheticism generally, seek to realize through the aesthetic. If this is the case, then Adorno has a special significance for the new aestheticism. By dialectically reordering the Kant–Hegel–Heidegger constellation in the interests of the transcendental aporetic account of art's modern alienation, Adorno renders unthinkable art's ethical promise unless riven by aesthetic bereavement.

Adorno Minus Social Theory

From this perspective, it seems perfectly consistent with Adorno that the fate of art is bound up with bereavement. Yet the loss or bereavement of aesthetics for Adorno is not a loss of an originary unity—as it is for Heidegger—but the effect of social and cultural division which, though it has never in fact been historically absent, must be overcome. Bernstein, however, conflates Adorno's socially dynamic transposition of Heidegger's concept of bereavement with bereavement *per se*. This is because Bernstein, like a number of other contemporary writers on Adorno, views Adorno's social theory as largely discredited.¹² Bernstein and the advocates of the new aestheticism want Adorno's aesthetic paradox without what is perceived as his 'vulgar sociology'. We would argue, therefore, that because Bernstein is not prepared to take on Adorno's sociology as *integral* to his aesthetics, he is left with a strongly Heideggerian sense

¹⁰ See Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*.

¹¹ See Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art'.

¹² See Peter Osborne, 'Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism: The Problem of a 'Postmodern' Art', in Andrew Benjamin, ed., *The Problems of Modernity. Adorno and Benjamin*, London 1989.

of the aesthetic paradox as bereavement. The consequence of this is the de-differentiation of the agency of aesthetic alienation. For Bernstein, aesthetic alienation is simply the result of the birth of modernity, whereas for Adorno's social theory it is the repeated effects of persisting social divisions. In effect, this amounts to the reification of social division as bereavement and the naturalization of the aesthetic paradox. It is no surprise, then, that for Bernstein all critiques of the aesthetic as pervaded by loss, 'no matter how theorized or explained',¹³ are works of remembrance. Rather than social division being the site of beauty sundered, Bernstein contests that 'modernity is the site of beauty bereaved'. Thus, the register of social agency is forsaken for the register of historical occurrence, of the *fait accompli*, of fate. We will want to look at the implications this has for art history, particularly how this conception of bereavement, by *holding* in the aesthetic—'preserving' it from the intrusions of the social world—impugns the fundamental assumptions of the 'social history of art'.

The critique of Adorno's sociology implicitly sets limits for art practices and art history. Bernstein's marginalization of Adorno's social theory of art is at the same time an attack on the principles of the 'social history of art'. This emerges emphatically as a dispute over art's autonomy. For Bernstein the virtue of post-aesthetic philosophy—Hegel, Heidegger and Adorno—is that it does not disavow the autonomy of art, as has been the case for the sociology of art, the social history of art and its postmodern variants. In fact, Bernstein argues that there is an undisclosed reliance on a post-aesthetic conception of art's autonomy in the work of those writers who confidently proclaim the disintegration of art's autonomy. As Bernstein says: 'Even writers on art who think that the proper way of comprehending art is as an institutional phenomenon . . . hold that the language of art, art practices, are autonomous practices, wholly unlike ethical or cognitive practices'.¹⁴ As such, Bernstein shares with Bowie a primary ontological commitment to art as a special category of experience. To talk of art is always to be forced up against its autonomy. Any commitment to the social history of art is, therefore, self-defeating because it attempts to view art *through* social history. In this Bernstein puts forward a general—or at least undifferentiated—defence of art against the social, resulting in the failure to distinguish between different kinds of post-aesthetic voice. At one point, in his discussion of art as an institution and the social constitution of the art spectator, it is not clear to the reader whether he is referring to Peter Bürger, T.J. Clark, or Pierre Bourdieu, who not only have different post-aesthetic voices, but are engaged in different disciplines. Having conflated these voices, it is possible for him to assume that any post-aesthetic theory which seemingly leaves the aesthetic behind in the pursuit of the social 'merely replaces mental talk (aesthetic attitudes and the like) by practice (institution or language-game) talk, but leaves the categorical separation of art and truth firmly in place'.¹⁵ In short, Bernstein reduces the complexity of post-aestheticism, remaining silent about that range of post-aesthetic writing which is as critical of the canon as it is of art's autonomy.

¹³ Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, p. 4

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

For Bernstein, there is no question that the categorical separation left 'firmly in place' might be a de facto institutional arrangement. Whereas for others the insistence on viewing art as an institution is based on the suspicion that the categorical frontiers of art could have been established through violence, a violence that is not outside art and aesthetics, but which violates them by treating de facto limits as de jure boundaries.

The Social and Art History

To say Bernstein and the new aestheticism has established a new cultural agenda on aesthetics is perhaps to put it too strongly. Nevertheless, a new mood of sensitivity to aesthetics, subjectivity and autonomy has certainly been felt in circles wider than the philosophy of aesthetics. A number of art critics and art historians have addressed what they perceive as the shortcomings of the post-aesthetic treatment of art as social. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and even T.J. Clark—a founder of a socio-logically informed and a methodologically self-reflexive art history—have all identified themselves with a 'return to aesthetics'. This return has involved a radical reassessment of their former political commitments to the social in art. As with the new philosophers of aesthetics, their pursuit of the aesthetic appears as a result of the crisis in the political usefulness and intellectual validity of the social in art. However, if Adorno is the defining presence of the new philosophy of aesthetics, a direct engagement with Adorno's writing is conspicuously absent in the work of Harrison, Wood and Clark. But perhaps this is not too surprising. For these three writers, the questioning of the place of the social in the judgement of art turns on the primacy of empirical aesthetic experience. If Bernstein is haunted by the spectre of Heidegger, Harrison, Wood and Clark are haunted by the spectres of Clement Greenberg, Hilton Kramer, and Paul de Man, respectively. By exemplifying the arguments for the empirical irreducibility of art, these spectres do not lead Harrison, Wood and Clark to positivism and formalism, but rather to the ethics of close reading. What they take from this ethics is primarily a rejection of the programmatic experience and judgement of art. In Harrison this has been narrativized as a redemptive personal experience, leading him back from the 'blindnesses' of his former commitments to a Marxian and Wittgensteinian critique of the primacy of the visual to the reclamation of Greenberg. For the last twenty-five years, Harrison has been a close collaborator with the artists Art & Language. In the early eighties, whilst working on a series of paintings entitled *Portrait of V.I. Lenin in the style of Jackson Pollock*, they were surprised to find that they thought some works as better than others, despite the fact that they were programmatically produced. Given the group's sophisticated and combative commitment to a post-aesthetic understanding of art, this experience of value was utterly anomalous. It was Greenberg's writings which enabled Harrison to reconfigure his understanding of art in the light of this experience of value. Indeed, Harrison would find Greenberg to be a substantial ally in pitching value against the programmatic and the social. An example of how this shift took shape can be found by examining two essays on abstract art written by Harrison before and after the assimilation of his anomalous insight. In 1980, in his essay 'The Ratification of Abstract Art', he argued that the meanings of abstract works must be produced through language, and that the control and cir-

culuation of that language was institutionally and violently imposed through a 'dogmatic heuristic'.¹⁶ More recently, though, in his writing for the Open University Modern Art course, he has argued that it is only for those unaccustomed to abstract art that it appears absurd, and that abstract works require a certain mode of sensitivity from the viewer.¹⁷ It is as though in speaking of ratification, of institutional legitimization, he was standing outside the church complaining about how it treated its believers, whereas now he is inside beckoning sceptical souls into the fold.

The Social History of Art Revised

A similar moment of aesthetic revelation is evident in T.J. Clark's recent revision of his own art-historical practice. The key encounter of this is his long-standing engagement with the art criticism of Michael Fried. In the early eighties, Clark openly accused Fried of the double sin of formalism and ahistoricism. For Clark, Fried was the spokesperson for the bourgeoisie's detachment of art 'from the pressures and deformities of history'.¹⁸ However, from declaring that there was 'so little common ground' between them,¹⁹ in an informal meeting in 1991 at the Museum of Modern Art, Clark realized before the work of Jackson Pollock that he shared far more with Fried than he had imagined. A short time afterwards, these intuitions were given a formal hearing in a discussion with Fried in the Museum of Modern Art for the Open University.²⁰ What is striking about this discussion is the willingness of Clark to assent to Fried's distrust of Clark's own 'social history of art'. At the same time, Fried presents a tentative reassessment of his strident opposition to the social. In fact, a strange inversion of positions takes place. Whereas Clark argues that the social history of art always aspired to an ethics of looking, Fried announces that the aesthetic for him was always an ethical category because of the way aesthetic convictions embed the individual in social life. Yet, although this looks like a simple inversion, or meeting halfway, Clark has adopted Fried's principle that looking at art is already ethical, and needs no supplementary ethical support to justify it. However, Clark is no convert to Fried and the legacy of Greenberg. He remains resistant to the complacent authority of the centred humanist liberal

¹⁶ Charles Harrison, 'The Ratification of Abstract Art', in *Towards a New Art: Essays on the Background to Abstract Art 1910-20*, London 1980, p. 151.

¹⁷ See Charles Harrison, 'Abstraction', in *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction*, London 1993. The specific arguments about abstract art seem haunted by his earlier work even as they attempt to bracket the relevance of institutional critique, but in other places this reserve drops, such as in the closing remarks of the Open University Study Guide. 'The concept of aesthetic experience, we suggest, points to a kind of critical awareness, hard to put into words precisely because it is an experience of the limits of language: an intuition that the representations of politics, of ethics, of economics, of philosophy, of history, and, of course, of art history, are all and various forms of simplification', Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, 'Modernity and Modernism Reconsidered Study Guide', *Modern Art: Practices and Debates (Study Guide 4)*, Milton Keynes 1993, p. 50.

¹⁸ T.J. Clark, 'Arguments about Modernism. A Reply to Michael Fried', in Francis Francina, ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, London 1985, p. 86.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁰ The discussion was produced as a video 'T.J. Clark and Michael Fried in Conversation about Jackson Pollock', Open University, *Modern Art: Practices and Debates*, produced by Nick Levinson, programme notes by Paul Wood, BBC 1993. See *Broadcast Notes 2, Modern Art: Practices and Debates*, Milton Keynes 1993, pp. 31-4.

connoisseur. This perhaps explains Clark's recent attachment to de Man's writing as an elaboration of the ethics of close reading without any investment in the liberal humanist conception of subjectivity. At a recent College Art Association session in New York entitled 'A de Manian Art History?' Clark appeared to support de Man's concept of the undecideability of reference to defend the moment of experience and judgement of art from the reductivism of accounting for something in terms of its social causes.²¹ Thus, we would argue, Clark's reading of de Man is not symptomatic of some latent irresolution *within* the social history of art, but a radical redirection of it. It now seems for Clark—and this could be said to be paradigmatic for the new aestheticism as a whole—that art has got more to say about the world than the world has got to say about art.

If Harrison and Clark lend a certain authority to the return to aesthetics for art historians, it is Paul Wood who stands out as the only writer—to our knowledge—to have defended at length this shift in art history for the Left. In an article 'Mistaken Identities' published in *Art-Language* in 1994, he takes stock of the same problems as Harrison and Clark, but takes this methodological shift as having important implications for a radically transformed understanding of the relationship between art and politics.²² In this there is certainly something of the confessional, as if the mistaken identities in question are the author's own. Essentially, Wood turns to the language of aesthetic value, the vindication of art's autonomy, and the revaluation of subjectivity as necessary correctives to what he sees as the instrumentalism of social accounts of art and the critical relativism of postmodern art theories. As in Eagleton and Bowie, the suppression of the aesthetic on the Left since the seventies—its constant rehearsal as ideology—is understood to have allowed the Right and liberals to identify the aesthetic as their own territory. Wood blames this colonization of the aesthetic by the Right on the failure of the Left in the seventies and eighties to address matters of aesthetic value as ethical. However, this failure of the Left in general is identified with what he sees as the specific failure of historical materialism: 'The weakness of historical materialism in the matter of individuality, subjectivity and so forth is beyond dispute'.²³ Irrespective of the crisis of Marxism, thus, it must be said, is a strange verdict. That is, if one regards, say, Adorno as an historical materialist—and one should—then it is impossible to say that historical materialism must be inadequate in these matters. The reason Wood can overlook Adorno in this way is because he conveniently conflates historical materialism with its orthodox, stage-managed version. This allows him to critique the social history of art and the radical post-modernists with impunity; all are tainted with 'puritanical idealism' and the 'suppression of idiosyncrasy'.²⁴ It would be easy to believe that this was written in 1983, and that, having just read Nietzsche, and Deleuze and Guattari, Wood is out to attack the sinister influence of Marxism's 'gulag mentality' on contemporary culture. Until recently, however, Wood was identifiable with a non-orthodox Trotskyist political position,

²¹ See Christopher S. Wood, 'Paul de Man and Art History', *Flash Art*, vol. 28, no. 183, Summer 1995.

²² Paul Wood, 'Mistaken Identities', *Art-Language*, new series, no. 1, June 1994.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

and moreover, would still claim to be working within a Marxian tradition.²⁵ Indeed, if Harrison and Clark have in the past identified their art-historical practice with historical materialism, it is Wood who continues to make this relationship explicit. This makes Wood's turn to the new aestheticism all the more intriguing. And it is this suspicion that Marxism is 'intellectually beleaguered',²⁶ that makes his use of the arch-conservative critic, Hilton Kramer, all the more perplexing. Although Wood is no friend of Kramer's politics, he thinks that Kramer's perception of Marxism as instrumental can be transposed for the self-critical revision of historical materialism, and thereby offer the Left a way out of the cultural crisis of Marxism.²⁷ In his own words: 'Kramer's brand of Modernist conservatism is more sophisticated than [the] typically English academic conservatism, to which [Jackson] Pollock is as incomprehensible as Conceptual Art. But the principle weapon in the armoury of each is one and the same: the assertion of the need for quality in art. It should be clear that the Right is not to be opposed by abjuring all talk or judgement of value. What is required is that it should be reclaimed from them.'²⁸

Value Versus Partisanship

On this score, Wood uses Kramer because he assumes that the Left's historical subsumption of the question of aesthetic value has given the Right's defence of aesthetics against deconstructive incursions a moral authority. Having established that historical materialism is in need of modification—which all historical materialists worth their salt have always understood—Wood does not choose to complicate, differentiate and dialecticize the Left's elaboration of the question of value, but puts it into question by finding a kernel of truth within the Right's attempt to ensconce it. It is in the service of this that Wood caricatures Marxism as instrumentalizing. But the attraction of the Right's framing of value for Wood is its principled resistance to the indignity of partisanship, of the necessity 'to oppose [the] reduction of the problems of evaluation and interpretation to a mere conflict of interests'.²⁹ There are moments when Wood explicitly struggles with the rival ethical claims of non-partisanship as an inclusive commonality and partisanship as the necessary response to division and inequity. Then, he seems to sense a genuine dilemma: 'To characterize art and the regarding of art in terms of a disinterested spiritual elevation above the mundane is clearly to run against the interests of those to whom the condition of mundane reality offers no cause for celebration; those without the leisure for reflection, for example. On the other hand, if art is pressed into service directly to redress the condition, its *raison d'être* is immediately weakened'.³⁰ This characterization of the dilemma is poor, however. His eventual

²⁵ See Paul Wood, 'Previous Convictions' (a review of Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism. A Marxist Critique*), *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1991); and Alex Callinicos and Paul Wood, 'Marxism and Modernism: An Exchange Between Alex Callinicos and Paul Wood', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1992).

²⁶ Wood, 'Mistaken Identities', p. 13.

²⁷ See Hilton Kramer, 'Modernism and Its Enemies', in Hilton Kramer, ed., *The New Criterion Reader: The First Five Years*, New York 1988.

²⁸ Paul Wood, 'Mistaken Identities', p. 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

preference for disinterestedness is inscribed into it by couching its drawbacks in terms of the 'interests' of a supposedly external group, and describing the inverse as an internal violation of art itself. There is no sense that actually existing cultural value might be marked by the divisions in question. In particular, there is no sense that the question of value might be marked by its domination by conservatives. Wood's invocation to 'reclaim' judgement is victim to the blindness of a common form of appropriation: a lover's phantasized and projected appropriation of his or her object of desire. In this respect, Wood, and the new aestheticism in general, is over-generous to the aesthetic in order to obtain what is perceived as the transcendental truth of the non-partisan. We would argue, therefore, that because divided societies produce antinomies, there are social and cognitive costs resulting from both the partisan and the non-partisan. Wood ultimately denies this, minimizing the costs of disinterestedness by deflecting accusations of 'elitism', and emphasizing the costs of critical practice by shoring up art's autonomy. The costs of non-partisanship are minimized at the same time as the costs of partisanship are emphasized, as if the non-partisan had no secrets.

Autonomy and Partisanship

As is evident from the preceding discussion, in a short period of time the new aestheticism has established a rich confluence of pressing ideas on autonomy, subjectivity, value and art. This has raised the level of debate on these questions to an unprecedented degree in the English-speaking world. A number of these writers have drawn out with great nuance and detail the radical implications of Adorno's aesthetic theory. As a result, they have extended our understanding that the rejuvenation of Adorno is crucial in overcoming the mistakes and aporias of deconstructionist, poststructuralist and 'vulgar' Marxist approaches to culture. Thus, it is not our intention to repudiate the ethics of particularity, the irreducibility of the concept of autonomy, or to declare that conservative writers on aesthetics have nothing to offer the Left. Nevertheless, we have set out to ask serious questions about the status of subjectivity independent of subjectivities, value independent of values, ethics independent of politics, art independent of culture and the social. As we have stressed so far, the new aestheticism has tended to homogenize the content of these categories, degrading the achievements of the political cultures of the Left over the last hundred years—particularly the last twenty-five years. The new aestheticism embraces 'sensuous particularity' by neglecting those social particularities which the Left has brought to life. It is a political achievement that the grand humanist categories and canonic distinctions of dominant culture have been fractured according to the specificities and fault-lines of class, race, gender and sexuality. It is a political and cultural achievement that art has been 'secularized' through the liberation of the 'meanings of the dominated' across a range of subject positions and social locations. And it is the diminishment of this achievement that we want to repudiate. For our urgent task is not only to address the homogenization of the political, but that of the cultural and the aesthetic. We want to argue, therefore, that the new aestheticism expects to put social division under critical view by immersing itself within the particularity and openness of the aesthetic. What is unacceptable about this is that the aesthetic is assumed to be

critical of *social division* without taking account of *cultural division*. So the question is: can the promises of aesthetics be made good in a divided culture?

The fundamental issue of this question, then, is whether a defence of autonomy entails the critique of partisanship. It is clear that the new aestheticism believes that it does. Bowie's pre-reflexive subjectivity, Wood's and Harrison's guarded vindication of disinterestedness, Bernstein's cognitive defence of the aesthete are all confident dismissals of the partisan. The voice of the partisan for the judgement and experience of art might be politically incoherent and unsustainable. The Left has typically regarded this rebuke of partisanship as very serious—for it casts a shadow over the Left's entire project. But, in giving political credence to partisanship, the new aestheticism seems to leave the Left's project intact for all social purposes, and reserves the critique of partisanship for aesthetics alone. On the assumption that aesthetics is critical by dint of being aesthetic, these writers call into question the critical practices which artists, art historians and cultural theorists have developed in order to secure a liberation from the *untruth* of art and aesthetics, their broken promises, bad habits and canonic structures. As such, if the Left have typically sought to resist the constraints of social and cultural division through critical practices, the new aestheticism turns from this, advancing a critique of the critical itself. A defence of the critical, though, is not limited to the argument that all knowledge and judgement is contaminated with the expediences of political life, nor is it simply the result of the rebuttal of the liberal illusion that apolitical behaviour has an apolitical effect. That critical practices are partisan can also be understood as a *corrective* to the suppression of the insidious operations of power immanent in all knowledge and judgement. However, it is not sufficient to demonstrate the implausibility of non-partisan, disinterested knowledge and judgement. For, it could be argued that, practically and ethically, the non-partisan remains something worth pursuing. Relative disinterestedness might be judged to be superior to well-founded partisanship. This dilemma has tended to be resolved on the Left by identifying the secret of non-partisanship as the partisanship of a dominant class, group or ideology which conceived its own interests as universal. By always keeping one eye on some sense of totality of social relations, the Left has treated claims to non-partisanship with suspicion, if not contempt. Despite its usefulness and good intuitions, though, such a reflex is insensitive to the particular case, and specifically to the pursuit of *relative* non-partisanship—whatever that might mean in the particular case. The non-partisan has other secrets, however. Principal among these must be its overlooking of the logical curiosities of non-partisanship *within a divided and conflictual society*. By exploring the logical relations between the partisan and the non-partisan, we want to expose the weaknesses of the new aestheticism's theory of autonomy, and propose what we believe to be a superior alternative.

Questions about partisanship and non-partisanship lead to questions about what Roy Bhaskar calls 'illicit fusion' and 'illicit fission'. Illicit fusion amounts to the 'representation of sectional interests as universal ones', and illicit fission, which is 'less noticed', amounts to 'the

representation of universal interests as sectional'.³¹ He explains these two mistakes very simply:

one example of illicit fusion is ... the *exchange of non-equivalents* pivotal to the wage-labour/capital contract [by which] Marx hopes to demonstrate the dialectical *necessity and falsity* of the 'wage form'.

A social example of illicit fission is the ... *non-parity of equivalents* involved in paying female workers or immigrant workers less than native male workers for the same work.³²

The question that the claim to non-partisanship opens does not, therefore, culminate in the morass of a conflict of interests, but rather in the conflict of two types of interest. The critique of the very idea of the critical turns on these difficulties. It is unimaginable that work of this sort could be done without tracing the operations of illicit fusions and fissions, and of theorizing or assuming their legitimate or illegitimate conditions. This indicates the intricacies—and the stakes—in the claims and counter-claims for the partisan and the non-partisan. The result could be a curious sounding list of their logical relations: the non-partisan as secretly partisan, the partisan as ultimately non-partisan, the non-partisan as non-partisan, and so on. One consequence of the drawing together of the question of partisanship and the social content of Bhaskar's categories of fusion and fission is that it gives the claimant of non-partisanship or anti-partisanship specific work to do—namely, of specifying *how* this claim to the critique of the critical judges the partisan as partisan and the non-partisan as non-partisan. It is incumbent on the non-partisan to speak politically, or else to lose all rights to the claim to be non-partisan.

Liberal Delusions

Issues around partisanship are inextricable from issues of domination, but they are not reducible to them. The *fact* of domination is neither here nor there in these matters, it is what is dominant that counts. Thus, the challenge to something which is dominant is not ipso facto an expression of the universal interests of the oppressed, this view being the shared delusion of liberalism and poststructuralism. A good example of what we mean by this is the Anglo-American institutional domination in the eighties and nineties of the new art history—a critical extension and revision of Clark's social history of art under the impact of gender, anti-racist and gay studies. The fact that the new art history is institutionally dominant does not place it against the oppressed, but it is inevitable that its domination will result in academic challenges and resentments from those art historians who are dominated and marginalized by it.

Whether the interests of the dominated academics are legitimately or illicitly fused with the universal interests of the oppressed can be tested only case by case. Without seeking to defend the actually existing social history of art, we want to make the case that the new aestheticism's conventional theory of autonomy commits an illicit fission of the social and

³⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

³¹ Roy Bhaskar, *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*, Verso, London 1993, p. 168

³² Ibid.

the aesthetic. If we can demonstrate that the separation of the social from the aesthetic is not necessary for the maintenance of art's autonomy, and that art's social being is shaped by cultural division, then not only will the new aestheticism have been representing the sectional interests of minority culture as universal ones, but the supposedly sectional interests of the philistine will be revealed to harbour the universal interests of the oppressed. As such, we will show that the dominance of the new art history does not require radicals to oppose the political and cultural project of the social history of art. We will do this by developing a theory of art's autonomy which acknowledges these social factors as *intrinsic* to art and art history.

The Autonomy of Robinson Crusoe

The dispute over artistic autonomy can be held in abeyance at the level of positions and interests of its various disputants only for so long as freedom can be redescribed as privilege and vice versa. The widespread conviction that freedom and privilege are interchangeable in this way is the main intellectual obstacle to a resolution of this problem. That is, insofar as the most basic meaning of autonomy is self-determination, an elaboration of the concept will flounder if it says nothing about the *self* of self-determination. Freedom is usually thought to be guaranteed when this self is opposed by nothing and infected by nothing. Consider, for instance, Robinson Crusoe's relation with nothing. If Crusoe is to be regarded as autonomous, then this is self-determination conceived not only as determined by nothing else, but as existing in the absence of everything else. In other words, freedom from everything is figured physically—primarily geographically—as isolation. Independence is bought at the cost of all traces of interdependence. Crusoe's imperialist, bourgeois, virile autonomy is such that the *self* of self-determination acquires its independence by being cut-off. Natural, personal and social relations are actively repressed, denying his biological origin, infantile helplessness, familial and communal socialization and training in culture, and so forth. In short, Crusoe's independence is a disavowal of everything that made him what he is, and a rejection of mutuality, care and community. This is not autonomy at all, then, because the *self* of self-determination is ideologically and pathologically cut off from those necessary and essential independencies which constitute and form him as a self. Crusoe's self is an alienated individual. This mistake is to confuse—or illicitly fuse—the intrinsic with the positivistically conceived internal, and the extrinsic with positivistically conceived external. The point is to make a qualitative distinction between the freedom to act against one's own interests on the one hand, and the power, knowledge and disposition to act according to intrinsic needs, causes and purposes on the other. It is the latter which Bhaskar calls 'rational autonomy'.

What distinguishes rational autonomy from all other kinds of autonomy is that the *self* of self-determination is itself self-determined. Rational autonomy does not illicitly fuse the *self* of self-determination with actual and perceived interests of alienated individuals in a divided society. Bhaskar distinguishes between the internal and the intrinsic through his concept of permeation. Permeations are properties which are physically external—which for positivism means other—but which are

'existentially essential' and 'not just necessarily connected but internally related'. To figure autonomy in these terms is, in Bhaskar's words, 'to see things *existentially constituted*, and permeated, by their *relations with others*; and so see our ordinary notion of identity as an *abstraction* not only from their existentially constituted processes of formation...but also from their existentially constitutive inter-activity.'³³

The question of autonomy, then, has been dogged by the false assumption that the absence of constraints and extrinsic forces means, or is reducible to, the isolation of individuals abstracted from intrinsic permeations. The *self* of *self*-determination is not a monad, however, but a totality of internal relations. Autonomy is not the isolation of the self, but the unity of its internal relations, including permeations. Such a view can rigorously distinguish autonomy from privilege—at least in principle. The so-called freedom to exploit and similar abuses, is not autonomy at all, for these abuses ideologically suppress necessary internal relations. The difficulty, though, is to know how to recognize autonomy when you see it. This difficulty can be illustrated by the case of the conservative insistence on the autonomy of the nuclear family. To make such an insistence is to commit a grievous mistake, for it means to apply the principles of rational freedom to an institutionalized social entity which has been constituted, formed and maintained out of the needs and imperatives of a complex of master-slave relations. A claim for autonomy on behalf of an entity with internal relations that constrain autonomy can be made only through systematic repression. And one of the things that it must repress is knowledge of that repression.

The question of autonomy turns out to be a series of questions and judgments not only about the boundaries of truth and freedom, but about the sorts of knowledge that can only result from social action. For it is only as the result of practical and intellectual effort by feminists, Marxists and social historians that the family unit has been discredited at all. Thus, it is not simply a matter of whether or not to affirm what passes itself off as autonomous, but also of what to do to become or remain autonomous, and how to know autonomy when you see it. Being autonomous means acting autonomously, and presupposes becoming autonomous. This in turn means acting *for* autonomy, that is, winning autonomy from internal and extrinsic constraints. The agency of autonomy therefore follows a dialectic that can be separated into three stages: constrained agency; emancipation from constraints; and fully autonomous agency. Even if the path of this dialectic must initially be a hit-and-miss affair, eventually this must produce knowledge about itself in order to substantiate its claim as an agency of autonomy. This means that the absence of knowledge of what autonomy would or should be like is a constraint on autonomy.

The Romantic Bid for Autonomy

For the new aestheticism, the defence of aesthetics has involved the defence of art's autonomy. It is this autonomy which gives aesthetics its judgmental sovereignty. To defend autonomy is to defend the subject from the instrumental rationalities of science and the law. Any defence of

³³ Ibid, p 125

art's autonomy either requires the specification of or presupposes what is *proper to art*. This means judgements about art are to be restricted to specifically 'artistic' criteria. But this begs the question: What are these criteria? What exactly is proper to art? That is to say, the question of art's autonomy turns on an understanding of *what* exactly is being preserved, of what is the self of art's self-determination. In order to give substance to this, the philosophers of aesthetics return to early Romanticism, whereas the art historians largely return to Clement Greenberg. However, insofar as Greenberg inherits the Romantic defence of art's autonomy, the divergence of these two sources does not split the new aestheticism, but unites it. This is because the Romantic concept of autonomy, we would argue, is being transmitted through a modern notion of art's social marginalization and estrangement. The result of this is the confusion of art's autonomy with art's isolation. Modern autonomy is predicated on the absence of a popular public, cut-off in its integral self-sufficiency. The Romantics hoped for the exact opposite. Romanticism was more than an opportunistic reaction against established rivals. From the outset, the Romantics figured their enthusiasms against what they saw as the unfreedom of normative modes of art and thought. Long before Max Horkheimer and Adorno wrote their dialectical critique of the positivistic confidence in 'machine, mathematics and organization',³⁴ the Romantics recognized domination lurking within the apparently neutral interests and effects of Enlightenment thought itself. The Romantics were quick to counter the dangers of a dehumanizing rationality, stressing instead the truth and freedoms of excess, individualism and voluptuousness, replacing the controls of reason with the transgressions of aesthetics. Romantic revolts against academicism, classicism, mechanicism and materialism, in favour of the Protestant virtues of immediacy, self-dependency, anti-authoritarianism and subjective authenticity, have ultimately formed an inveterate and yet largely repressed framework for the forms of modern cultural hegemony. But the persistence of Romanticism within modernity has not been without its costs. In case after case, what the Romantics instigated and revived, to rid themselves of insidious elements of organization and control, what they took to be the best chances for emancipation, have been inverted into a compendium of small-minded ideas, platitudes and miserable clichés. In this and other ways, what we might call the historical travesty of Romanticism can be traced along the dialectical lines of the failures and successes of its bid for art's autonomy.

For early Romantic artists such as Casper David Friedrich, William Blake and William Wordsworth, the achievement of artistic autonomy was to be found in aesthetic immediacy, 'forms of expression directly understandable without convention and without previous knowledge of tradition'.³⁵ That is, in the very refusal of the 'proper' mediations of a classical education and the decorum of connoisseurship, the Romantics believed that art might speak 'at once and to all'.³⁶ The first condition of such an art is that it obey only its own laws, for it was argued that these official mediations are in fact extraneous to art. In this, artworks were to

³⁴ T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, Verso, London 1989, p. 41.

³⁵ Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, *Romanticism and Realism. The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art*, London 1984, p. 18.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

be autotelic—that is, having their own purposes, not the purposes of previous generations or external institutions—and autogenetic—coming into being as if without a history, fathering oneself, as well as being free from constraint and interference. By ridding the work of its traditional and institutional constraints, they supposed themselves to be rendering the work of art supremely accessible, even transparent. Indeed, we might say that the Romantic perseverance of immediacy against official rules, codes and forms of attention entailed giving the advantage to the non-expert observer, who, without instruction, special knowledge and so forth, was thought to be always already ‘immediate’. The Realists inherited these hopes, but the Romantic conception of autonomy as exoteric expression did not survive long, certainly not into the second half of the nineteenth century, by which time most of the Romantic attitudes had congealed into a set of norms within official institutions. Thus, the modern conception of art’s autonomy was based on the failure of the Romantic bid for autonomy. This does not mean that Romantic ideas are irredeemably bad, only that their relation to freedom has suffered serious damage on account of Romanticism becoming a travesty of itself. Romantic ideas were fashioned out of suspicion and hope, and cannot be abstracted from this economy of meaning without producing some form of concession towards Romanticism’s changed ethical position under late modernity. By losing this position, with and against the bounds of neo-classical hegemony, even Romanticism’s anti-authoritarianism has become an empty cipher of freedom, at home as much with market-forces fanatics like Milton Friedman as with cyber-anarchists such as Nick Land. The point is that the Romantic conception of autonomy emerged as a specific critique of art’s cultural domination through tradition, and therefore its libertarian impulse becomes deeply ambivalent outside that context.

In these terms, we want to make a fundamental distinction between the Romantic bid for autonomy as a refusal of institutional closure, and modern autonomy as the defence of cognitive and aesthetic closure. In particular, we want to challenge the new aestheticism’s blindness to forms of autonomy other than those based on the modern conception and experience of art’s isolation from everything else. Despite its ultimate historical failure, the Romantic bid for autonomy stands as a corrective to the modern defence of autonomy, defying the identification of autonomy with isolation. Hence, we regard the new aestheticism’s extension of Romanticism’s faith in the immediacy of autonomous art to be both cognitively and historically mistaken. For, whereas Romantic artists expected the institutional disburdening of art would result in universal transparency, they were forced by events to abandon this faith. Despite this, the new aestheticism revives the expectations of aesthetic immediacy without seeing hope of cultural transformation as fundamental to those expectations, and as a consequence making excuses for cultural division.

Adorno and Autonomy

Thus, if the modern conception of art’s autonomy is unacceptably tied to art’s social isolation, and the Romantic conception of art’s autonomy is historically unavailable, then one is faced with either the end of

autonomy or the need to rethink its basic assumptions. This is why Bhaskar's reconceptualization of the question of autonomy is important. For it allows us to conceive of a defence of the autonomy of art without mistaking autonomy for isolation. In Bhaskar, autonomy is not a matter of blocking and securing borderlines for the purpose of discrete, decorous individuation. Self-determination does not rely on the exclusion of everything external, only of everything extrinsic. As such, art's autonomy cannot be presumed to be achieved by its gaining independence from the categories and values of the social world.

What would be counted as legitimately intrinsic to art despite being external to it? What would it be like to see art as '*existentially constituted, and permeated, by [its] relations with others; and so see our ordinary notion of [art's autonomy] as an abstraction*'? The answers to such questions are not ready to hand. But the categories of Bhaskar's conception of autonomy—fusion, fission, permeation—allow us to nuance the new aestheticism's sensitivity to the subsumption of the particular under the general. Understood as the recognition of a form of illicit fusion, the sensitivity to subsumption, by itself, is in danger of out-doing positivism by isolating all things from one another and forbidding all cases of equivalence and taxonomy. The epistemological violations of subsumption must be avoided without reverting to the illicit fissions of positivism and the like. And this cannot be done, once and for all, by theorizing a fair and balanced epistemology. The ethics of conceptualization must be worked out case by case; not judging beforehand, but through a dialectic of knowledge and agency. Therefore, to think of the autonomy of art as an independence from social questions, particularly political and sociological analyses, is to cut works of art off from those external factors which constitute it. This does not justify putting art into the service of extrinsic political or social ends, but it would defend the independence of art from extrinsic forces without repressing its necessary and essential interdependencies. One practical consequence of such an account of art's autonomy would be to open the possibilities for a social history of art that would remain throughout concerned with matters intrinsic to art whilst engaging in non-aesthetic forms of attention.³⁷

To enlist Adorno in support of this sense of autonomous art's permeation by the social would mean to go against the grain of his current status as the principle defender of the modern account of art's autonomy. In Andreas Huyssen, for instance, Adorno is the arch-protector of modernist art's exclusionary borders, just as Griselda Pollock treats Adornian defences of autonomy as antithetical to feminist interventions in art and art history.³⁸ Although the new aestheticism is not blind or indifferent to Adorno's sense of autonomous art's social permeations, nevertheless they argue that it is Adorno's social theory of art that needs to be exorcised from his aesthetic theory. What is more, Adorno himself would surely approve of the defence of his aesthetics from the reduction to a 'mere

³⁷ See John Roberts, 'Introduction: Art Has No History! Reflections on Art History and Historical Materialism', *Art Has No History! The Making and Unmaking of Modern Art*, Verso, London 1994.

³⁸ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Indiana 1986. Griselda Pollock, Mary Kelly et al., 'Disaffirmative and Strategic Practices', proceedings from a public seminar at Vancouver Art Gallery, June 1989, ed. Judith Mastai, *Parachute*, no. 62, April–June 1991.

sociology of illusion';³⁹ his critique of Lukács makes this very clear. Yet, while opposing the reduction of aesthetics to sociology, Adorno would be vehement in his refusal to separate his sociology from his aesthetics. For Adorno, the social and aesthetic are not incompatible, but they are asymmetrically related: aesthetic form is immanently social, but social factors do not explain away aesthetic form. This is why he had little time for the representation of political convictions, pressing artistic form to do the work of registering social and cultural conflict through their refusal to communicate. 'The immanence of society in art', Adorno argues, 'is not the immanence of art *in* society but the essential social relation *of* art'.⁴⁰ Adorno's acknowledgement of this social relation indicates his understanding of the social permeation of autonomous art. For him, the autonomy of art is an opposition to society produced through social relations. Our Bhaskarian sense of autonomy does not read what is external to autonomous art—its social relation—as opposed to it. In this, Adorno's sense of permeation need not be marginalized or repressed in order to preserve the borders of autonomy, for these permeations are internally related to it. Therefore, Adorno was not one of those modernists who regarded art's autonomy as a total disengagement from the social, yet his modernism would not permit these permeations to enter art except as configurations of form. Without claiming that this is what Adorno 'really meant', our reading of Adorno's autonomy both distances him from his supporters in the new aestheticism and asks fundamental and potentially far-reaching questions of the Adornian conception of artistic autonomy. Moreover, this reading transforms the internal hierarchy of Adorno's writing, revaluing those moments when he registered the challenge of art's otherness, such as his announcement that 'the philistine is not completely wrong to sneer at art'.⁴¹ And it is precisely the truth-claims of the philistine that the new aestheticism dismisses in its attack on the social in art.

The Philistine and the Voluptuous

The concept of the philistine is under-theorized in Adorno, but is implicitly present throughout because of his social theory of form. In *Late Marxism* Jameson notes this, making us aware of the importance of the marginal presence of the philistine in Adorno. Jameson points out that for Adorno philistines are not 'those who do not "understand" art or, better still, who do not "understand" modern art; rather, they understand it only too well'.⁴² What Jameson does not share with us—and in this he concurs with the new aestheticism—is an understanding of the deconstructive force of philistinism against those aspects of Adorno's autonomy that isolates art from its social life. Jameson argues that what the philistine finds incomprehensible is modern art's deferral of happiness. The modern art-lover, on the other hand, defends art's deferral of happiness as the only guarantee of preserving universal happiness at the moment of recognizing its present absence. Adorno does not defend modern art's deferral of happiness as such, but incorporates the moment

³⁹ Osborne, 'Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism', p. 23.

⁴⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 330.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁴² Jameson, *Late Marxism*, p. 152.

of truth of the philistine into his aesthetic theory resulting in a perception of art's social and formal culpability as the effects of art's deferral of happiness. This is what Adorno famously calls the 'blackness' of art. The outcome is that Adorno draws together the love of art and the *ressentiment* of the philistine without proposing the resolution of their conflict by expressing this rivalry as a wound on the body of art. But his dialectic is not the dialectic of art and its other, it is merely the dialectic of art inscribed by its other. Adorno assimilates the moment of philistinism to art; he does not assimilate the moment of art to philistinism. Therefore, Adorno underestimates the critical potential of philistinism by failing to allow voluptuous pleasures and inept forms of attention to distract art from its intellectual duties.

The philistine is defined as insensitive, uncouth, and brutal especially in matters related to art. It was Matthew Arnold, particularly in his book *Culture and Anarchy*, who formulated its modern usage as the fear and hatred of art, or in his own words, 'the resistance to light',⁴³ refining the definition which had been established in eighteenth-century Germany, referring generally to the unschooled plebeian population. Given that no one attends to art without sensitivity or knowledge at all—but with different sensitivities and knowledges—the constitutive insensitivity of philistinism must be a particular form of insensitivity: namely, of being insensitive to what is established as appropriate to art. Philistines are, therefore, to paraphrase Bourdieu, those to whom art speaks a foreign language. But the sensitivities and knowledges of the philistine are not simply different from so-called aesthetic ones because this difference is organized hierarchically according to established cultural power and authority. Modern autonomous art has special forms of attention which are meant to correspond to the special characteristics of artworks. Yet, because the modern conception of the autonomy of art illicitly isolates it from everything else, it is through forms of cultural exclusion, not cognitive appropriateness, that philistine sensitivities are judged to be extrinsic to art. The ontological status of philistinism is curious. Does philistinism single out an empirical person or group of persons who happen to be insensitive and brutal? Or, is the philistine the discursively constructed other of established views of art and aesthetics? As such, there are two complementary dangers that have to be addressed before questions of this sort can be resolved. 1) To attempt to empiricize the philistine means to give social reality to the ideological category of cultural division, as was the case with Arnold's search for an actual group of persons who exhibit the insensitive and brutal characteristic of his category of the philistine. 2) To theorize the philistine as an entirely different theoretical category, as in the case of Bourdieu, means to treat the distinction between the philistine and the sophisticate as mere ideology, and to expect to find its reality elsewhere, such as in class division. This is why Bourdieu is right to examine cultural division in terms of cultural exclusion, but wrong to naturalize the sociological picture of cultural exclusion by characterizing the philistine as the proletariat.⁴⁴ And this is

⁴³ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. J. Dover Wilson, Cambridge 1983, p. 101. It should be noted that Arnold reserved the term 'philistine' for the middle class who, he thought, 'not only do not pursue sweetness and light, but who even prefer to them ... business, chapels, teas-meetings'. Ibid.

⁴⁴ See Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

also why philistine values and categories are not reducible to any actual body of the 'meanings of the dominated'. As an empirical and discursive construction, philistinism has a dialectical identity which shifts and slides along the edges of what is established as proper aesthetic behaviour. Consequently, values, categories and forms of attention once described as philistine can become incorporated into artistic and aesthetic practices through intellectual and practical struggle, but this will not diminish philistinism, only redraw the lines of demarcation. If the modern conception of art's autonomy illicitly cuts art off from everything else, then the philistine does not destabilize this border in order to give permission to the insensitive and the stupid, but to question the authority of those cognitive judgements. In fact, the concept of the philistine is peculiarly well placed, as the definitional other of art and aesthetics, to bring to bear on art and aesthetics the cost of their exclusions, blindnesses and anxieties. Indeed it could be said that the philistine is *the* spectre of art and aesthetics.

The Spectre of the Partisan

The concept of the philistine gives us the space and confidence to allow into the aesthetic those pleasures of the body and forms of attention that the discourse of aesthetics has historically sought to marginalize and control. In this, the philistine as spectre is the partisan of the excluded pleasures, the excluded body and 'inappropriate' forms of attention. The philistine refuses to take a disinterested stance towards a culture which stands as a judge over the philistine's pleasure without the philistine's consent. As such, the category of the philistine accuses the cultivated refinement of the body as a motivated denial of voluptuousness and excess. The philosophy of aesthetics has always made these denials, but with less and less justification. Initially, as with Kant, aesthetics distanced itself from the body's needs and impulses because of the widespread misfortunes of the body: poverty, illness, hunger and early death. For Kant, a life dominated by bodily needs could not be free, and it was from this prevailing experience of bodily subjugation that Kant derived his conception of the body itself. Nowadays, though, the body is not exclusively identifiable with need and survival, because the body, for many, is no longer merely something to overcome, but also the home of pleasures exercised without guilt. Historically, Kant wrote at the tail-end of this identification of the body with need and survival, but the philosophy of aesthetics has retained much of it by suppressing the range of bodily pleasures in favour of 'sensuous particularity'. The cognitive and ethical value of art and aesthetics is secured by impoverishing the body and elevating aesthetic experience and art beyond the voluptuous contingencies, activities and delights. The new aestheticism continues this tradition by thinking of the body as at its best—as ethical—as 'sensuous particularity'. It should be clear from what we have said that the concept of 'sensuous particularity' homogenizes the range of bodily experiences, unifying the body according to a legislative authority of what counts as *proper* pleasure. Our 'philistine' invocation of the voluptuous body is a corrective to this closure, not in order to set up an alternative naturalistic model of the body, but in the hope of opening up the question of aesthetics and the body to the practical, plural and conflictual world which the body inhabits.

If the philistine defence of the voluptuous body bursts the banks of the decorum of aesthetic discourse, then we arrive at the political, not as a separate category of experience—which is even there in Adorno, specifically in his critique of Brecht—but as internally related to autonomous art and aesthetic philosophy. In this, our argument for a reconceptualization of art's autonomy has not set out from the presupposition that the autonomy of art can simply be redescribed as elitist. On the contrary, we have attempted to transform the conception of art's autonomy immanently from the closures of exclusion and isolation to the constellation-like openness of permeation, inter-presence and inter-relationality. This is in sharp contrast to the new aestheticism's holding in of the aesthetic and the categories of art's judgement and experience. Thus, if we have demonstrated the new aestheticism depends upon the de-differentiation of the body, it is also evident, in our discussion of Bowie and Wood in particular, that it closes down subjectivities to a pre-ordered unity thought to be the very guarantee of subjectivity itself. Against this, our freeing of the autonomy of art and aesthetics from the conformities of exclusion and isolation makes it possible to conceive of the autonomy of art as constituted through *different* voices. This has enormous consequences for the question of value since there can be no fixed or stable character or point of origin for the question of aesthetic value if the autonomy of art and aesthetics is understood as perpetually rewriting their borders against the voluptuous and practical demands of the philistine. From this perspective, the validity of aesthetic judgement does not stand or fall on the securing of a disinterested and *singular* value for art. Indeed a Bhaskarian sense of art's autonomy does not require that interests and conflictual values be given away for the purposes of 'appropriateness', but stresses that it is through the encounter of difference and of partisan voices that interpretations and judgements get made. It might be that the world has got as much to say about art as art has to say about the world, and that judgements about art have to survive in the same world as other judgements.

A Guerrilla with a Difference

*Régis Debray, one-time comrade of Che Guevara, goes to Chiapas to meet Sub-Commandante Marcos, who speaks for the Zapatistas.**

An indistinct trumpet from faraway in the middle of the night. This is how news spread from one hamlet to another, from valley to valley, by long sounds on the horn. Marcos and the mayor Moisés, ever cunning, sitting under a silk-cotton tree, look at each other, inquiring. Although only a metre away, I cannot distinguish their eyes. A second sounding. Then, the bell of La Realidad starts to ring. It is the village-camp *tojolabal*, where we chat nostalgically, under the huge tree. Electric lanterns light up here and there, sounds of motors, beacons to the side of the *ruta*—the post of control, at the entrance to the hamlet. The Indian commander, anxious, gets up, the small escort of insurgents huddles into a semi-circle. An incursion, an unexpected attack?

Two minutes later, Moisés returns. False alarm. It was only a Red Cross jeep bringing back the corpse of a young boy, a victim of anaemia. He was called Francisco, and was nine years old. Three days ago his family had taken him to the dispensary which is ten kilometres away, at the edge of the Zapatista zone. He will be buried here. Corn is increasingly scarce. Malnutrition is spreading throughout communities. A child died this morning. What does it matter since he was never really born? Among the indigenous people of Chiapas, who lack civil status, since a birth certificate is never issued, there is never a death certificate. Burials take place simply. Routinely.

Why then this sudden disturbance and this clinking of arms in the esplanades fringed by smart sheds with thatched or zinc roofs where chickens and dogs roam? In the last few weeks, the village security force has detected one or two attempts at infiltration by armed civilians. It is not now certain whether the government wants to add the martyr to the myth. It considers that to surround them and let them rot is less damaging to it than to exterminate. Still, the *guardias blancas*, the right-hand men of the big landowners, remain. One suspects that these landowners would pay dearly for Marcos's skin. Abstractly, it would in fact be the most economical solution, which would be disguised as a settling of scores between rival leaders, or as a grim story of narcos.

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Of the Zapatistas' Chiapas, one thing must first be said: the guest goes there to meet the Sub-Commandante and, surprise, he finds indigenous people. Tzotzils, Chols, Tzeltals, Tojolabals, Zoques, ancient zombies become complete citizens, with or without their faces covered with red scarves. Anonymous rebels, organized in whole communities, over an area of many tens of thousands of square kilometres, from the cold high lands of the Ocosingo, which recall the landscape of the Auvergne, to the suffocating thickness of the Lacandona jungle, which is reminiscent of the humid Amazon. A territory which is half Switzerland, half tropical. A population, with its administration, its army, its safe-conducts, its regulations. Its *municipios*, its *ejidos* (communal territories), its *milapas* (corn fields or family parcels), its wooden amphitheatres built under the open sky for large gatherings, nicknamed *Aguascalientes* (warm waters), after the revolutionary convention of 1914. Its farmyards, its horses and cows. Expecting a band of guerrillas, one runs into a community—or, in this case, a mosaic of communities.

From New York, Paris and even 'Mexico City', one only sees the sons of Zapata through the keyhole of the camera: a Zorro with a black balaclava helmet, a cap with three stars, a brown jersey, crossed cartridge belts, a rucksack, a Che-like pipe—why these torn boots, this badly repaired cap, I ask Marcos. 'Its more *picturesque*', he answers with a wink. In such photographs, the foundation is lacking: the world of the Mayas, with its memories, its languages, its traditions, its ceremonies. With its wounds, its hunger, its new hopes. And this foundation changes everything. 'Marcos' is the interface. The media, that necessarily personalizes issues, sees only the Occidental 'exterior', as the symbolic star gains in force, and certainly his style, his fables and his personalities, which issue, however, from an Oriental and hidden 'interior'.

Guerrillero or superstar? Neither one nor the other. A creative activist. The EZLN (Zapatista Army for National Liberation) is not—any more or yet—a guerrilla movement (despite having started as one ten years ago after the elitist model of *foco*, the armed vanguard). It has become the organization of self-defence for some tens of thousands of excluded people—of three million inhabitants, Chiapas has a million indigenous people. And the 'Sub' uses publicity, not as an aim, but a means. For him media action is Clausewitz's war applied to newspapers: the political extended by other means. He has dealt some blows to the establishment, which returns them in full measure. As is natural.

If he took printed matter as a weapon, and, at the beginning, four newspapers as interlocutors, he has also struggled with television and the mass media, ridiculing and humiliating the most powerful people, the officials, and such a bill has to be paid. When I mentioned to him that in a major evening newspaper, Chiapas is said to be the last meeting place of the international '*red jet-set*', he burst out laughing. 'All's fair in love and war', he murmurs, shrugging his shoulders, 'They risk turning you into an attraction. This is nothing very special, don't you think? And then, after that? Marcos will lose his image but the indigenous will gain security. That is the main point. They will have more chances to eat and fewer threats over their heads. So we say, welcome to the celebrities. We have to hold out until the rainy season. Another month and we will be saved until next year.'

How Celebrities are Useful

The rains start at the end of May. They turn paths to mud, making them barely passable, and obstruct the operations of the helicopter-borne commandos—the helicopter being the only serious threat; the one that the peasants have no time to warn the rebels against, as they otherwise do with the slightest movement on the ground. When a 'celebrity' travels to La Realidad, they drag journalists with them and dissuade military expeditions. Danielle Mitterrand, while passing through Mexico, announced her arrival in the region where her foundation sent food and medicines. Marcos is delighted to meet her and thanks her. That will produce a photograph in the national press, and thus a respite, and a fissure in the media blockade.

Corn is the priority. Pursued by the army's movements, the peasants find it more and more difficult to sow and to harvest. Or to cut wood for essential heating and construction. The military, explains the 'Sub', tries to buy the peasants by offering them beans and milk, or flour for *torrillas*, in return for disowning the movement. The indigenous Zapatistas reject such offers. Dignity can make you hungry.

The war of images? It is more than a metaphor. Each side films the other. At ten in the morning, every three days, an armoured column slowly traverses La Realidad along the central dirt road. The pretext: to bring supplies to the military camp of San Quintin on the other side of the Euseba river. At the head and the tail of the convoy, a hidden soldier films with a video camera. And Zapatista sympathizers, doctors or social workers, take photographs, returning their fire. It was in this manner, it is explained, that one day an American military advisor was surprised perched on a half-track. This lapse in etiquette before witnesses was never repeated.

The laws and constitutional guarantees—including the freedom to come and go—remain effective. A police checkpoint in Las Margaritas checks the identity of travellers, photographs them, but does not act in a particularly aggressive manner. Cars are not searched. The police drift between being brutal and good-natured. Chiapas is not a 'free Republic' but a kind of state within a state, which the latter surrounds and would certainly like to suffocate, but politely, without unnecessary stridency. For the moment, this equivalent of two or three Corsicas is calm, despite acts of intimidation that here and there the soldiers permit themselves. Internecine killings occur more often in neighbouring states, in the Guerrero and Oaxaca, than in this zone of virtual combat. The balance of power defines the situation.

Since 1988, throughout Mexico, the deaths of 421 left-wing militants have been recorded. A low-intensity civil state, Mexico is no longer a dictatorship, without being a democracy. Chiapas is neither at war nor peace. The rebels form neither a clandestine band nor a registered political party. Arms are there to ease negotiation, having first made it possible. Today the authorities talk with outlaws who otherwise they would hunt down. A liaison agent between the interior minister and the rebels, Javier Elorriaga, arrested at the start of the offensive of February 1995, is today sentenced to fourteen years in prison. The indigenous people, often

illiterate, have as representatives and guests at the negotiating table, the cream of the academic intelligentsia—anthropologists, historians and lawyers. Guerrillas who make the effort not to shoot; an army that occupies but avoids confrontation. Victory goes to whoever, in this stand-off, does not break the truce. Whoever fires first will have lost, since the battle is more psychological than military.

For a revolutionary, the middle ground is not a comfortable place to be. It traps Marcos in the unpleasant dilemma of either being criminalised if he renews combat—which erupted only once, on the 1 January 1994 (the day when the free-trade treaty with Mexico's northern neighbour took effect), when he occupied the big cities of the state, and there were fifty deaths—or of being relegated to folklore if he remains with his arms at his feet. Turned into the diabolical figure of a murderer if he responds to military pressure closing in; ridiculed as a bluffer if he reacts by withdrawing. How can one escape from the trap? By emerging from the perimeter, by increasingly nationalizing the stakes. The second round of the negotiations no longer concentrate on the indigenous question but on the very structure of the regime. An explosive programme—for which the Zapatistas will have served as detonators.

'Chiapas', says Manuel Camacho, the ex-minister of foreign affairs appointed by then president Salinas to restore peace after the insurrection of January 1994, 'is the laboratory for the democratization of the country.' Supported by public opinion, Camacho was able to avoid the worst. The hard-liners of the PRI, the state party, wanted war without rhetoric. Ten years earlier, the young Camacho, then a senior civil servant, had prepared a project of agrarian reform for Chiapas. Under the pressure of the *caciques*, *el señor Presidente* discretely buried the planned reforms. Result: the explosion.

Puritanism in the Revolution

Marcos has the history of Mexico running through his veins. A strange libertarian who thinks in patriotic terms, he commands a hierarchical army and reacts in communitarian, not individualist terms. For the new Zapatism, going by the rustic nature of the leader at least, is based on the same equation as the old one: the Gospel plus the poncho, the missionaries' biblical tradition plus the agrarian tradition of the uprooted Indians, everything at the service of a religion of the motherland. As in 1910, the restitution of land and the expulsion of the merchants from the temple are the major aims of the uprising.

The religious imprint is evident, up to the puritan and disciplined execution of order in the plantations, islands of order with something, at least in La Realidad, of the Jesuits' 'reductions' of Paraguay. Even small presents to individuals are prohibited, only the community gives and receives. This is how corruption can be prevented. One recognizes a Zapatista village especially by the fact that in the streets no child stretches out their hand, whereas in Chamula, which is still under the control of traditional *caciques*, the visitor is harassed by flocks of little barefoot beggars in rags. Alcohol is banned. Drugs are also out, that goes without saying. Nudity is prohibited. There are separate approaches to

the river for men and women, where one bathes in the evening beside the horses. Everybody has to wash himself, some in underpants, some in shirt and bra. Everything is spelt out with signposts and placards. There is a little church for communion on Sundays. A dispensary, a school. Dormitories with hammocks. Small altars where the Virgin of Guadalupe faces a lithograph of Zapata hung on shanty walls. Frugal nutrition: black beans and tortillas. No electricity. In the evening, one can hear communal singing under the trees, preceding the sleep of the just. Ecologists and the pure of heart will find themselves at home on the edge of the Lacandona jungle. An ideal holiday camp—at least as long as the army keeps its distance, since each new garrison brings the impurities that the evangelism of the rebels, hardly warlike, has tried to exclude: marijuana, tequila and prostitution.

On the facade of the church of the diocese of San Cristobal, which was once the see of Bartolomé de las Casas, the Indians' defender in the sixteenth century, one can still distinguish the stains of rotten eggs and fruit furiously thrown by the *coletas*, the hard-core anti-Zapatistas. Don Samuel Ruiz, the bishop, has bodyguards. This 'red' bishop, disapproved of by the Vatican, has been in office for thirty-six years. The government had asked Rome to recall him, even before the village was taken over by the Zapatistas, until they realized that because of his prestige among indigenous people, he was best placed to act as an intermediary between the state and the rebels.

Today he is attending an episcopal council. It is his Dominican deputy, Gonzalo Ituarte, who receives me. He has spent twelve years in the midst of the *comunidades*. In the vestry-offices one can see the portraits of previous popes, one of John XXIII, though not of John-Paul II—surely due to lack of space. We touch on the cold civil war, the local oligarchy's accusations against the church, and the first incidents of the revolt at the time of the celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, when the statue of a conquistador in the village square was toppled by the Indians.

'I disagree with armed struggle', he says to me, 'but I understand the causes. The Zapatistas fight for the same thing that we do. If I would reason as a theologian, I would talk of a "just war". The social situation was unbearable. But what is a just insurrection if everybody is exterminated? Look at Guatemala, for instance. One hundred and fifty thousand deaths in twenty years. And fifty thousand refugees among us.' For the rest, there is no trace of discouragement in this small, jovial and lively man who holds communion with martyrs and saints, and who thinks that 'life, like the Spirit, always triumphs in the end.'

The next morning, a warm and spectacular welcome at La Realidad, the regular meeting-point for visitors, when Marcos and his people come to drag me from a refreshing rest in a hammock, and we depart on horseback in the direction of the forest. A brief hour of trotting through half-bare hills. Then we arrive at a camp in a glade, near and camouflaged, which reminds me of that in Nancahuazu thirty years ago. The deafening chirring of crickets and insects. Sentinels all around. Tacho, a member of the clandestine Indian revolutionary committee, joins us. We start

talking about the *humano* and the *divino*, as it is said in Spanish, of human and religious relationships within communities.

Tacho is Catholic but that is not important here. A secular outlook is necessary to avoid confrontation between ethnic groups and to maintain unity. People explain how the army attempts to divide in order to rule, by opposing one sector or faith against the others. Marcos, who has a quick and calm way of speaking, without lyricism, listens to my objections while smoking his pipe with a meditative expression. He explains how much the extent of international solidarity has surprised him and how much also he has been surprised by the attacks from old revolutionaries of Central America, with the exception of the Guatemalans. How difficult it is to want to belong to everybody and to nobody in the game of mutual exclusions among the international Left, and how much the Indian cause needs oxygen from outside to steer clear of any fundamentalist or racial turn.

I ask Marcos if the Internet can give technological wings to the internationalism of yesteryear? 'To the sympathizers, yes, but I myself can not use it. With satellite tracking I would have a bomb on my head in eight minutes.' The Chechen leader Dudayev did not take such precautions. 'At the beginning', he continues, 'we thought we would not have to be around for too long; then we discovered we were only a symptom, a fragment of a protest movement much larger than us, which stretched overseas.' Some months earlier, despite the news blockade, a million and a half Mexicans responded in the villages to a referendum about what should be conceded to the rebellion.

What will be necessary to make him lay down arms and take off the balaclava? When will he consider the aim of the war attained? 'The day', he answers, 'when an Indian will enjoy the same rights as a white in no matter what corner of the republic; the day when the party-state system is finished and when "election" will no longer be a synonym for "fraud". Today, an opponent is either killed or bought off: that is what has to change.' 'Don't hold your breath', I remark.

In the meantime, will they be able to hold out? 'In the worst case, we will return to the forest. We have already resisted for ten years. We can plunge once more into the catacombs for another ten years or more. The regime underestimates us militarily. All the better for us. Besides, it is true, we are wearing ourselves out. But the others are worn out faster than us. Everybody here is vulnerable but we are a bit less so than the government, this one or any other. Time is on our side. The economic situation is not about to change. Without any doubt we will finish by succeeding. The only problem is', he adds laughing, 'that we do not know what we will do afterwards.'

Writing to Robin Hood

Strange mixture of self-confidence and programmatic modesty, Marcos, who never misses an occasion for ridicule, does not give the impression of being full of himself. This is certainly a virtue when one, while still alive,



has acquired a little of the kind of legend that posthumously hung around 'Che'. From all directions, this fugitive receives the mail of a president to which he can obviously not reply, and which, moreover, has to be burnt in the most dangerous moments. There are all kinds of things. Letters of detained people from all corners of the world asking him to come and liberate them—he opened the prisons in Chiapas during the first days of the insurrection. Letters from authors of plays which are never performed, of apprentice novelists in search of publishers, of social reformers who in their paranoia seek a brother. But also, and more seriously, from widows and orphans. The role of Robin Hood has its inconveniences, especially in the absence of secretaries. Belonging to that odious species of temperate sleepers who can be content with four hours a night, Marcos, with the assistance of an electric lantern, conscientiously devours books and other printed matter, as in the good old days. There are delays that become advances. A bookseller in San Cristobal de las Casas, whispered to me on our way back: 'Since the Zapatistas, people here watch less television. They come to buy books. My business is doing better.'

To arrive at the capital is like jumping from the Orinoco to La Défense. Chiapas belongs to North American Mexico like Guyana belongs to the French Republic: the same flag, another planet. Questions rain down on the newcomer. About strategy, style, the colour of his eyes, alliances, the danger the movement represents... Nobody here, friend or enemy, doubts that the movement has the art of never being where it is expected. To surprise, to destabilize, is perhaps not enough for a political strategy, but it is sufficient in the sense that no politics can afford to ignore it.

Is this the old dogmatic Left re-emerging unscathed from the ruins? The dormant seed of Fidel concealing a sectarian authoritarianism? An astute manipulation of regimented Indian masses? A master of the society of the spectacle? A classic *caudillo* refreshed by postmodern humour and the reading of Cortázar, or the first representative of an eventual post-caudillism? All this is open to controversy.

'He amazes me for the worst and for the best', Octavio Paz confides, yet without tenderness for revolutionary Caesars and resistant to left naiveté. 'The spectacular side annoys me a little, but his capacity to establish quite profound links with the Indian groups is admirable. What I would like, is that he would enter political life and that he would help in the democratic transition.' I leave the welcoming library of the great poet and historian for a dinner with friends. There, Carlos Fuentes does not beat about the bush: 'He is a fine man, full stop. He has changed the history of this country. I appreciate him, I admire him, and I say it openly.'

Dismissing his beheaded Colombia, where not only terrorists imagine him as the last recourse and the president-in-waiting, García Márquez states — 'No question about it, if I put myself forward, they could elect me and that would be a real catastrophe.' He nods assent, smiling: Marcos is a comrade of the Left but a Colombian cannot mix himself up in the internal affairs of Mexico. 'Surely the most interesting personality of this country'—which counts for a lot, I say to myself—adds Julio Scherer, the doyen of Mexican journalists. 'He was also, for a moment,

the most important but the aura has dwindled away. History can change horses. Things move fast.'

'He has let his moment pass, it's a pity', agrees Jorge Castañeda, the respected analyst and politician of the centre Left. 'He does not like me, and yet I like him a lot', Porfirio Muñoz Ledo flings the words out. He presides over the left party of the legal opposition, the PRD: 'If he lets himself become cut off from the real country by the small radical left group that has become his court circle, this will be a great loss for Mexico.' Other fellow-guests join in, and then we're off for the rest of the night. This intense town is not made for those who go to bed early.

Mexico 1996. End of the reign, end of the regime, end of an epoch. The oldest party state in the world, founded in 1929, hesitates to turn the page. The United States restlessly observe their southern border where millions of *braceros* made hungry by the crisis push behind the barbed wire. Of these two countries, which will conquer the other? Which culture will sweep away its competitor? Nothing is definitively decided. For the moment the cul-de-sac is evident: a government that does not govern anything, or almost nothing; small villages that fall into dissidence; agitated streets, demanding a settling of accounts; technocrats educated in Yale or MIT lining up numbers on paper and on Sirius. A new social pact is pursued on all sides. Some predict a storm, others a slow deterioration.

'Welcome to hell', so the 'Sub' greeted the new president after his election. When he received me amidst the Zapatista *comandancia*, on a horse, with that sense of brilliance that characterizes him, the film-loving prophet took me by the arm and took me to see, at the other side of a ravine, a square of forest in flames: the Tojolabal peasants clear forest by burning. 'Life is cruel, don't you think? Fire must pass over the land for the grain to grow. You cannot construct if you do not first destroy.' It crosses my mind that cultivation by fire exhausts the land and devastates the best forests but, after all, it is he who knows the territory. I say nothing and in the night I watch the burning, this metaphor of the apocalypse.

Power from Below

'We do not want a revolution imposed from the top: it always turns against itself. We are not a vanguard. We are not here to close things down but to start renew our efforts', he repeated to me in the camp. 'Our aim: to give voice to civil society, everywhere, under all its forms, in all its fronts. We are neither the only ones nor the best ones. We do not have the truth or the answer to everything. Provided we raise good questions, that is enough for us ...' This statement, 'and now it is your turn to play' ends fifty years of the self-proclaimed vanguard. Take to arms but prefer stimulation to confrontation: this is the first originality. To pose as a national force without aiming for state power, without appetite for the role of deputy, governor or president: the second paradox. 'Politics with a difference': it is disconcerting, provoking, problematic. But naturally of concern to all those, beyond Mexican borders, who risk the bitter struggle of the exercise of power and of a will to justice.

It is in the nature of Indian communities—of Asiatic character—that power rises from below. This cult of consensus, this 'all together or nothing' attitude has made its mark on the small band of hierarchical and self-confident Guevara supporters who, in the old manner, plunged into the unknown in 1984. These whites came to convert the Indians to the revolution, as their ancestors did in the old days, to the Gospel; and, voilà, it is the Indians who have converted them to another conception of the world, horizontal and modest. Those who came from the city brought with them a sense of the individual, of the nation, and beyond, of the wider world; the natives a sense of harmony, of permanent referendum, of listening.

Each element deconstructs and reconstructs itself in contact with the other. This cross-breeding of two microcosms has meant progress for both. Zapatism, is the exact opposite of, and surely the antidote to, the Sendero Luminoso in Peru. 'If we finish by disappearing', Marcos insists, 'then, yes, it would be brutal and without hope. It would be Yugoslavia in the Mexican South. The Federal State would no longer have anyone to talk to but only enemies.' This suspicious dissidence probably plays a unifying and constructive role. It unites in the nation forces which otherwise would risk separation, make it explode.

A rebel of limits, one sends him on his way always with his fire-break of a nick-name: 'the romantic'. The man with the balaclava reassures one with his down-to-earth side, a sense for practical detail moderating the indispensable megalomania—necessary, I imagine, to endure 'the long voyage from suffering to hope', of eleven years of mosquitoes, black beans and clandestine work, of a decade with damp feet, without chocolates or press conferences. And now, the order of the day? 'To win', he answers, 'And to find corn'. No rhetoric in this poet, he speaks willingly about death, though he does not seem to have any predilection for suicide. One foot in the camp of the long-term Indian struggle, the other in that of the hurrying people of the metropolis.

It is difficult, this large space between distant memory and urgent issues. Which will dominate the other, the long time span of the Mayas or the short-term concerns of the yuppies? Hamlet, *that is the question*. Oral cultures have a slow rhythm, one deliberates, taking one's time, step by step. In Zapatista territory, away from the disorder of premature cities, it is always necessary to wait, under rain or sun; the indigenous people consult and let the hours pass with a smiling indifference.

To refuse the sights and the delights of power, in imitation of a demonstrative Left, protesting and moralizing, while simultaneously adopting the methods of force, in imitation of a voluntarist Left without illusions, that combination is an unusual challenge. For the management of dissidence and the assimilation of opponents, the Mexican system is the best in the world—if the Soviet Communist Party had sent an information-gathering mission to the PRI, the Soviet Union would certainly still be standing. No steel plate does not dissolve in this stomach. The rebels know it. The Zapatistas—neither guerrillas nor political party—one could see in this a way of fleeing the test of reality and responsibility.

Let us rather ask us if these Mexicans are not in the process of inventing a new realism. A rather good way of not extinguishing the rebellion's fire under the ashes of the state. To assume to the end the role of the defender of the oppressed, but by threatening to make a nuisance of themselves, and by publicizing a certain preparedness to rise to extremes, and not only by marches in the streets. It is the equivalent of the weak dissuading the strong. Could it be a third line between radical, verbal incantation and democratic-realist resignation? Locally this works. Without promising the Earth, the Zapatistas mobilize. They have transformed hundreds of thousands of people-objects into the subjects of history.

That, at least, is what I said to myself, near to Oventic in the Altos, while watching the pride with which a small, sixteen-year-old militia man was looking at us, lost in the haze, with hood and khaki uniform. He was stochically posting guard with his comrades in front of *Aguascalientes III*, one of the places set up by the indigenous inhabitants to receive the thousands of foreigners expected this year for the meeting of 'galaxies against neo-liberalism'. After having made us wait for an hour behind barbed wire, which was the time needed to go to consult the superior ranks by radio—to verify that there was a general agreement that we could cross the sacred fence—he took us on a tour of the result of several months work by bare hands: kitchens, canteens, dormitories, everything in wood palisades cut on the spot, and placed against the hill, an amphitheatre of board benches around a vast open space of clay—the equivalent to *Aguascalientes I*, destroyed by the army in Guadalupe Tepeyac. For a week, the soldiers search for confrontation with our forces. But we have given our word that we will respect the cease-fire', he looks us straight in the eye. '*Nuestras fuerzas, nuestra palabra*' ['Our strength is our word']. The adolescent's eyes shone with pride.

Mexico has a hundred million inhabitants, and only fifteen million indigenous people. The rebels, if they are not to rot where they stand, will have to multiply the bridges between the marginal and the majorities, clandestine operators and legalists. A simple 'Wretched of the Earth, unite' attitude will not overturn neo-liberalism today; the Zapatistas do not claim to have discovered the key to the dilemma, they do not have a doctrine. But in San Cristobal, in the Indian market, a *corrido* announces at the top of his voice on a radio-cassette: 'Marcos is everybody, Marcos is a comrade'. 'The end of utopias', this then was not a surrender. But a return to the essential: resistance.

Translated by Elena Lledó

Whither the 'Peace Process'?

Since the signing of the September 1993 Oslo I agreement, the Israel-Palestine 'peace process' has been punctuated by a series of dramatic developments. The purpose of this article is to assess their significance. I will first examine the September 1995 Oslo II agreement, the definitive document for the interim period until a final settlement is reached. I will then consider the likely outcome of the 'peace process.' I will finally suggest that, contrary to widespread belief, the recent victory of Benjamin Netanyahu will not substantively affect the process set in motion at Oslo. To clarify the issues at stake, I will refer to two illuminating critiques of Oslo I, Edward Said's *Peace and its Discontents* and Meron Benvenisti's *Intimate Enemies*.¹

The essence of the September 1993 Oslo agreement, according to Edward Said, was that it gave 'official Palestinian consent to continued occupation.' Indeed, the PLO agreed to serve as 'Israel's enforcer.'² 'The occupation continued' after Oslo I, Meron Benvenisti similarly observes, 'albeit by remote control, and with the consent of the Palestinian people, represented by their "sole representative", the PLO.'³ A close reading of the September 1995 Oslo II agreement only reinforces these judgements.⁴

Until Oslo, the international consensus supported a complete Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, and the right of Palestinians to form an independent state within the evacuated areas. The PLO accepted these terms. Israel and the US rejected them. Oslo II states that 'Neither Party shall be deemed, by virtue of having entered into this Agreement, to have renounced or waived any of its existing rights, claims, or positions.'⁵ Seemingly balanced, this provision actually signals a most crucial concession by the Palestinians. In effect, the PLO grants a legitimacy to Israel's pretence of possessing 'existing rights' in the West Bank and Gaza, and to Israel's rejectionist 'claims, or positions,' including those denying Palestinians the right to sovereignty in the

¹ Edward Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, New York 1996, Meron Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, New York 1995. The author wishes to thank Noam Chomsky, Adele Oltman and Cyrus Vesser for their comments on an earlier version of this manuscript.

² Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, pp. 147, 12.

³ Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, p. 218.

⁴ *Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, Washington, DC, 28 September 1995. Issued by the State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem.

⁵ Oslo Agreement, Article XXXI.

West Bank and Gaza, which need not be 'renounced or waived.' The broadly affirmed title of the Palestinians to the occupied territories is now put on a par with the broadly denied title of Israel to them. 'The West Bank and Gaza,' writes Said, 'have now become "disputed territories."' Thus with Palestinian assistance Israel has been awarded at least an equal claim to them.⁶ Once beyond dispute, Israel's withdrawal will now be subject to the give-and-take of 'permanent status negotiations.' With Palestinians on one side, and Israel and the United States on the other, little imagination is needed to predict who will give and who will take.

The Oslo Agreement

On all crucial issues—Jerusalem, water, reparations, sovereignty, security, land—Palestinians, according to Said, 'have in effect gained nothing.'⁷ The actual picture is, if anything, even bleaker than Said suggests.

Jerusalem: Amid an analysis of Jerusalem as the nexus of Israel's conquest strategy ('an ever-expanding Jerusalem [is] the core of a web extending into the West Bank and Gaza'), Said presciently observes that 'in the history of colonial invasion... maps are instruments of conquest.'⁸ Turning to Oslo II, we find that, although the text leaves Jerusalem's fate for the permanent status negotiations,⁹ to judge by the map appended to the accord, Jerusalem is already a closed issue. The official map for Oslo II implicitly places Jerusalem *within* Israel. Said also laments that the PLO agreed to 'cooperate with a military occupation before that occupation had ended, and before even the government of Israel had admitted that it was in effect a government of military occupation.'¹⁰ Indeed, the so-called Green Line demarcating pre-June 1967 Israel from the occupied West Bank has been effaced on the official Oslo II map. The area between the Mediterranean and Jordan now constitutes a unitary entity. Seamlessly incorporating the West Bank, Israel has ceased to be, in the new cartographic reality, an occupying power. On the other hand, the textual claim that Oslo II preserves the 'integrity' of the West Bank and Gaza as a 'single territorial unit'¹¹ is mockingly belied by the map's yellow and brown blotches denoting relative degrees of Palestinian control awash in a sea of white denoting total Israeli sovereignty. In sum, the official map for Oslo II ratifies an extreme version of the Labour Party's Allon plan and gives the lie to the tentative language of the agreement itself.¹²

Water: Although Palestinians will be granted an increment to meet 'immediate needs...for domestic use,' the overarching principle on water allocation for the interim period is 'maintenance of existing quantities of utilization,' that is, 'average annual quantities...shall

⁶ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–8.

⁹ Article XXXI.

¹⁰ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. xxix.

¹¹ Article XI.

¹² Conceived soon after the June 1967 war, the Allon plan projected Israel's incorporation of roughly half the West Bank, the remaining areas of 'dense Arab settlement' consigned to some kind of self-rule.

constitute the basis and guidelines.¹³ Turning to Schedule 10 ('Data Concerning Aquifers'), we learn that these 'average annual quantities' give Israelis approximately 80 per cent and Palestinians 20 per cent of West Bank water.¹⁴ Prospects after the interim period seem even dimmer. Although Israel does 'recognize Palestinian water rights in the West Bank,' these rights do *not* include the 'ownership of water,' which will be subject to the permanent status negotiations.¹⁵ Indeed, Israel already claims legal title to most of the West Bank water on the basis of 'historic usage.'¹⁶ That is, having stolen Palestinian water for nearly three decades, Israelis now proclaim it is theirs. Proudhon, at any rate, would not have been surprised.

Reparations: Juxtaposing the cases of Germany and Iraq, Said repeatedly deplores the absence of any provision for Israel to pay reparations: 'the PLO leadership signed an agreement with Israel in effect saying that Israelis were absolutely without responsibility for all the crimes they committed.'¹⁷ Indeed, Oslo II explicitly imposes on the newly-elected Palestinian Council 'all liabilities and obligations arising with regard to acts or omissions' which occurred in the course of Israel's rule. 'Israel will cease to bear any financial responsibility regarding such acts or omissions and the Council will bear all financial responsibility.' In what may be called the *chutzpah* clause, the Palestinian administration must 'immediately reimburse Israel the full amount' of any award that 'is made against Israel by any court or tribunal' for its past crimes. To be sure, Israel will provide 'legal assistance' to the Council should a Palestinian sue the latter for losses incurred during the Israeli occupation.¹⁸ Washing its hands of all responsibility for nearly three decades of rapacious rule, Israel—Said rues—'crowded' while 'an ill-equipped, understaffed, woefully incompetent Palestine National Authority struggled unsuccessfully to keep hospitals open and supplied, pay teachers' salaries, pick up garbage, and so on,' and 'dumped' Gaza 'in Arafat's lap...even though it had made the place impossible to sustain.'¹⁹ As we shall see, South Africa's apartheid regime displayed rather more magnanimity after its comparable withdrawal from and institution of 'self-rule' in areas of black settlement. Indeed, even after conceding the Bantustans independence, South Africa continued to cover much more than half their budgets through grants.

Sovereignty: Oslo II refers only to an Israeli 'redeployment,' not a withdrawal, from the West Bank.²⁰ Excluded from the Palestinian Council's purview are 'Jerusalem, settlements, specified military locations, Palestinian refugees, borders, foreign relations and Israelis.'²¹ Israel retains full 'criminal jurisdiction...over offences committed' anywhere in the

¹³ Annex III, Appendix I, Article 40; Schedule 8, 'Joint Water Committee'

¹⁴ Per capita water allotment for an Israeli is thus four times that of a Palestinian. See *Deiner*, 25 October 1993.

¹⁵ Annex III, Appendix I, Article 40

¹⁶ Noam Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New*, New York 1994, p. 210.

¹⁷ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. 103, see also pp. xxviii–xxxix, 9, 18, 66, 154.

¹⁸ Article XX

¹⁹ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, pp. xxxii, 103.

²⁰ Article 10.

²¹ Article XVII

West Bank 'by Israelis' or 'against Israel or an Israeli.'²² Regarding internal Palestinian affairs, the Council effectively cannot 'amend or abrogate existing laws or military orders' without Israel's acquiescence.²³ There is even an explicit proscription on the wording of postage stamps which 'shall include only the terms "the Palestinian Council" or "the Palestinian Authority".'²⁴ On a related matter, the Palestinian National Council must 'formally approve the necessary changes in regard to the Palestinian Covenant.'²⁵ No comparable demand is put on Israel to renounce its long-standing claim to the West Bank—and much beyond.

Security: Israel retains 'responsibility for external security, as well as responsibility for overall security of Israelis.'²⁶ In the name of 'security,' Israel is thus free to pursue any Palestinian anywhere.²⁷ Although duty bound to protect Israeli settlers and settlements that are illegal under international law,²⁸ the Palestinian police cannot—'shall under no circumstances'—'apprehend or place in custody or prison' any Israeli.²⁹ Israel preserves the right 'to close the crossing points to Israel.'³⁰ Palestinians who, due to Israel's systematic destruction of their economy, are dependent on work in Israel are thus still left to the latter's mercies. Israel retains 'responsibility for security' at the border crossings to the West Bank and Gaza. Accordingly, it can detain or deny passage to any person entering through the 'Palestinian Wing,' and enjoys 'exclusive responsibility' for all persons entering through the 'Israeli Wing.' Said dismisses these arrangements as a 'one-sided farce.'³¹ Yet, Palestinians do get to post a policeman and hoist a flag at their entrance and provision is made for the expeditious processing of Palestinian VIPs.³² The 'Palestinian side' also gets to issue new ID numbers for residents of the West Bank and Gaza—which, however, 'will be transferred to the Israeli side.'³³

Land: The first phase of Israel's redeployment leaves Palestinians with territorial jurisdiction over only 30 per cent of the West Bank. Further redeployments are promised in the future but their extent is not specified.³⁴ And within the areas coming under Palestinian territorial jurisdiction, Israel continues to claim undefined 'legal rights.'³⁵ Moreover, the Palestinian areas are non-contiguous. A caricature of South Africa's Bantustans, the Palestinian territorial jurisdiction comprises scores of tiny, isolated fragments.

²² Annex IV, Article I, paras. 2, 7a.

²³ Article XVIII, paras. 4–6.

²⁴ Annex III, Article 29.

²⁵ Article XXXI.

²⁶ Articles X, XII.

²⁷ Annex I, Article V; see also Annex I, Article XI, para. 3b for application of this provision even to 'territory under the security responsibility of the Council'.

²⁸ Article XV, Annex I, Article II.

²⁹ Annex I, Article XI, para. 4d, see also Annex I, Article V, para. 3b2.

³⁰ Annex I, Article IX; see also Annex V, Article VII.

³¹ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. 53.

³² Annex I, Article VIII, Annex I, Appendix V, Section F.

³³ Annex III, Appendix I, Article 28.

³⁴ Article XI.

³⁵ Annex III, Appendix I, Articles 16, 22.

Said is plainly right that Israel 'achieved all of its tactical and strategic objectives at the expense of' the Palestinians.³⁶ More problematic, however, is his explanation of how this defeat came to pass. Perhaps because *Peace and its Discontents* was written with an 'Arab audience in mind,'³⁷ Said puts the onus on PLO bungling. With unfortunate echoes of Abba Eban's famous quip, 'the Palestinians have never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity for peace,' Said ruefully recalls Arafat's 'catastrophic misjudgements and failures,' running from the 'folly of Palestinian involvement in Lebanese affairs [that] was to lead to the disasters of 1982,' through peace overtures of the Carter Administration that 'Arafat categorically turned down', to 'the misguided policies of the PLO leadership during the Gulf crisis.'³⁸ Not only are these judgements open to question³⁹ but cumulatively they tend to obscure US-Israeli responsibility for the undermining of Palestinian national aspirations. For all its corruption, criminality and idiocy, the PLO did endorse, from the mid-1970s, a full peace with Israel in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. Notwithstanding the international consensus favouring such a two-state settlement, the US and Israel blocked implementation. Oslo signalled the complete triumph of US-Israeli force. Consider as an illuminating comparison the Camp David accord of 1977, an earlier milestone in the 'peace process.'

In February 1971, Egypt offered Israel a full peace treaty in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Sinai. Claiming security imperatives, Israel obdurately refused. Note the exact symmetry of Arab offer and Israeli response on the Egyptian and Palestinian fronts. What then accounts for Israel's acquiescence in full withdrawal at Camp David in 1977 but not at Oslo in 1993? Said opines that 'for the Arabs, war has had disastrous effects.'⁴⁰ This is not altogether true. What brought Israel around at Camp David was not an Egyptian diplomatic offensive but the offensive of Egyptian troops in the October 1973 war.⁴¹ Israel, like all conquering powers, only understands the language of force. Said no doubt knows all this. Indeed, he himself insists that the 'struggle over Palestine is principally' a 'real or material one,' not a 'psychological misunderstanding.' To prevail, Palestinians must match Israel tit-for-tat in the hardball politics of power.⁴² A quantitative juxtaposition of the Camp David and the Oslo II accords also points up the reality of Israeli intentions in the West Bank. Specifying in simple, lapidary phrases a full Israeli withdrawal and reciprocal Egyptian pledge of peace, the historic Camp David accord runs to barely seven pages.

³⁶ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. xxv.

³⁷ Ibid., p. xxiii.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 7-8, 73, 82-3, 120, 180-1.

³⁹ No one knows better than Said that the impetus behind Israel's 1982 Lebanon invasion was not PLO 'folly' but rather its 'peace offensive' (Israeli strategic analyst, Avner Yaniv); for sources, see Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, New York 1995, ch. 6, note 52; and Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Rise and Fall of Palestine*, Minnesota, forthcoming, November 1996, ch. 3. For the more complex issue of the Palestinians' stance during the Gulf crisis, see my *Rise and Fall*, ch. 4 and epilogue.

⁴⁰ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. 127.

⁴¹ For details, see my *Image and Reality*, ch. 6.

⁴² Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, pp. 35-7.

The 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty comes to less than ten pages. Yet, the Oslo II accord fills more than three-hundred folio-size pages. With its multiple, chapter-length annexes and appendices and multitude of pettifoggery, obscure, ambiguous and mutually contradictory details, Oslo II presages, not the emancipation, but the emasculation of Palestine.⁴³

Consequences of the Agreement

One may want to argue that, the letter of Oslo notwithstanding, implementation of the accord's provisions for a Palestinian council, police force and so forth, will still put Palestinians in a better position to achieve true self-determination. The tacit, Pollyannaish assumption is that *any* new reality *must* improve on the present state of affairs. Yet, the new reality will more than likely allow for the tightening of Israel's grip on the Palestinians. This is the 'Bantustanization' scenario projected not only by Said but seasoned Israeli analysts as well. 'It goes without saying,' Benvenisti, for example, writes 'that "cooperation" based on the current power relationship is no more than permanent Israeli domination in disguise, and that Palestinian self-rule is merely a euphemism for Bantustanization.'⁴⁴

Before considering this prospect, it is important to first take note of another significant Palestinian loss at Oslo. Said recalls the opinion of Walter Sisulu that 'one reason for the African National Congress's victory was its *international* campaign against apartheid.'⁴⁵ Every effort South Africa made to normalize its global standing through cosmetic concessions such as Bantustan 'self-rule' and subsequent independence proved unavailing. Its isolation only deepened. Yet, Oslo has allowed for the full rehabilitation of Israel. No longer condemned as an occupying power, Israel rather stands beyond reproach as a full-fledged peacemaker. Indeed, all the United Nations resolutions which, as Said observes, 'although...paper resolutions...represented the only international guarantee that [Palestinian] claims would not be ignored,'⁴⁶ have been effectively nullified by Oslo. This contrast suggests that, in the short term at least, Bantustanization will prove more stable in the West Bank and Gaza than it did in the South African setting. I will return to this point presently.

After World War II, South Africa embarked on the path of separate development or apartheid to ease the conflict between an ethnically exclusivist state and an ethnically heterogeneous population. Hendrik

⁴³ See Amos Oz's breathtaking disingenuousness in the wake of the February-March 1996 Hamas suicide bombings: 'There are hundreds of clauses and subclauses to the Oslo Accords, but the essence is clear and simple: we stop ruling over you and suppressing you, and you recognize Israel and stop killing us. But up until now we have delivered and you haven't.' 'Letter to a Palestinian Friend', *New York Review of Books*, 4 April 1996.

⁴⁴ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, pp. 70, 147. Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, p. 232. Indeed, the Bantustan precedent is plainly uppermost in the minds of all the signatories to as well as dissenters from the Oslo agreement; see Graham Usher, *Palestine in Crisis*, London 1995, pp. 8, 10, 85, n. 6.

⁴⁵ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. 95, emphasis in the original.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155

Verwoerd, post-war Prime Minister and architect of apartheid, conceived the new initiative primarily as a political expedient to abate foreign criticism.⁴⁷ Using the vocabulary of decolonization, the South African government contrived a political separation in which whites took the lion's share of material resources and blacks were effectively consigned to a state of total thralldom. Technically free of South African domination through the creation of Bantustans, blacks—Verwoerd imagined—would have only themselves to blame for their abject state. Slow to see the merits of this scheme, sceptical whites—including Cabinet ministers—feared that the homelands or Bantustans would enhance black political power and undermine security, giving free rein to 'Mau Mau'-type terrorism. On the other side, sincere opponents of South African rule at first looked favourably on the Bantustans as a step toward justice.

Comprising multiple fragments of barren land encircled by white settlements, each Bantustan was originally cast not as an independent state—a prospect the Republic officially ruled out—but rather as an area of ethnic 'self-rule.' The South African government forcibly removed from the designated homelands white residents, who angrily charged that they had been 'sold down the river.'⁴⁸ The first homeland granted 'self-rule' was Transkei in 1963. Maintaining that 'more was to be achieved by supporting separate development than by opposing it', the leader of the new entity, Chief Matanzima, could point to the trappings of self-determination such as a Transkeian flag and national anthem.⁴⁹ Its power narrowly circumscribed by the South African-imposed constitution, the Transkei government was vested only with such civil responsibilities as tax collection, education, local public works, agriculture, courts and welfare. South Africa reserved for itself jurisdiction over external and internal security—Transkeian units performing basic police functions—foreign affairs, communications, transportation, financial institutions, and population movement. It also retained a veto on all Transkei legislation and jurisdiction over whites within Transkei's borders. Note that Oslo II is a veritable carbon copy of the Transkei constitution. As even an observer sympathetic to the Bantustan experiment conceded, "The central Government holds the whip hand."⁵⁰

Although Matanzima, with a nod from South Africa, kept an iron grip on power in Transkei, political dissent was marginally tolerated. Indeed, 'deeply concerned that self-government should not be seen as a puppet show,' South Africa even encouraged 'a certain amount of opposition... It shows that the figures are alive.'⁵¹ Creating 'growth points' with tax

⁴⁷ Verwoerd hoped that political separation would, in his words, provide a 'basis for the Western members... to prevent action against South Africa in the UN.' Gerhard Mare and Georgina Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*, Bloomington 1987, p. 29.

⁴⁸ Roger Southall, *South Africa's Transkei*, New York 1983, p. 149. Forming a lobby and aligning with the opposition political party, the white settlers resisted government plans. Ultimately, however, most returned to South Africa.

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Butler, Robert I. Rotberg and John Adams, *The Black Homelands of South Africa*, Berkeley 1971, p. 31.

⁵⁰ Christopher R. Hill, *Bantustans*, Oxford 1964, p. 59.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

concessions and especially cheap labour as incentives, South Africa sought to lure foreign investment on the periphery of and later inside Transkei. In fact, only a 'tiny percentage of the population' benefited from these policies, while the Transkei economy, tightly monitored by South Africa, became ever more closely linked and subordinate to it.⁵² The identical strategy with identical results is, as Said shows, now unfolding in the West Bank and Gaza, with 'growth points' rechristened 'industrial parks.'⁵³

Sovereignty Without Justice

As international pressures mounted, South Africa moved to grant Transkei independence in 1976. Arguing that it would legitimate a division of wealth grossly unfavourable to the interests of blacks, opposition leaders rejected the South African initiative. Through adept political manoeuvring, Matanzima was able, however, to muster a popular electoral mandate for independence, although only a small minority truly supported it.⁵⁴ An emergent entrepreneurial class, together with the traditional, conservative elites and a privileged—and corrupt—official class administering the bloated bureaucracy, undergirded the new order. Matanzima maintained that the Transkeian 'nation' had successfully rid itself of colonial domination. Indeed, it did enjoy the same legal status as any other state. Yet no foreign power recognized Transkei's independence, the United Nations General Assembly declaring it 'invalid' by a vote of 134 to zero, with only the US abstaining.

After independence, the Transkei government did, to its credit, abolish the most egregious apartheid regulations,⁵⁵ but it also muzzled all political opposition. One observes a similar dynamic in the West Bank and Gaza, with the arbitrary humiliations, curfews and so forth typical of Israeli rule curtailed, yet with Arafat putting in place—in Said's words—a 'system of dictatorial rule...in which citizens' rights, especially in the realm of civil freedoms, will be absent.'⁵⁶ South Africa's

⁵² Newell M. Stultz, *Transkei's Half-Leaf*, New Haven 1979, pp. 93, 96.

⁵³ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. 153. See also Usher, *Palestine in Crisis*, pp. 38–40 and Chomsky, *World Orders*, p. 254. Such an economic strategy serves the dual purpose of allowing for the exploitation of cheap indigenous labour while maintaining an exclusivist ethnic state, and enhancing the credibility of the Bantustan alternative by making it financially solvent.

⁵⁴ As in Transkei, the real purpose of the January 1996 election in the West Bank and Gaza was for the subject population to 'democratically' ratify the annulment of its basic rights and to 'democratically' install a Quisling leadership. In neither case was the densoy settlement subject to a public referendum. Rather, the electoral victory of, respectively, Matanzima and Arafat was 'interpreted' as acclamation of it. Thus, a vote for Arafat purportedly signalled support for Oslo. The actual facts suggest otherwise. For an analysis of the Transkei election, the modalities of which exactly prefigured the recent Palestinian election, see Southall, *South Africa's Transkei*, pp. 120f. For the Palestinian election, see Norman G. Finkelstein, 'Arafat Victory Doesn't Equal Real Reconciliation,' *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 January 1996.

⁵⁵ Trumpeting the abolition of apartheid within Transkei, the Matanzima regime claimed to have done more for black freedom in South Africa than any of the more militant liberation movements: 'The Transkei has ...liberated 18,000 square miles...from the grips of apartheid—the pass laws, job-reservation, apartheid at our post offices and segregation at the numerous beaches along our coast.' (Southall, *South Africa's Transkei*, p. 254.) No doubt Arafat will soon be making a similar pitch against his principled critics.

⁵⁶ Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. 172; see also p. 157.

refusal to cede additional land to Transkei evoked angry denunciations and threats to sever ties from Matanzima. Shackled by its total economic thralldom to the white republic, the Transkei regime was in no position, however, to make good on its threats.⁵⁷ Willingly or not, it remained what it had always been: a servant of South African power.

The case of the KwaZulu Bantustan is equally revealing. Through the mid-1970s, Chief Buthelezi of KwaZulu won guarded praise from the African National Congress and even the militant South African Students' Organization, and the enmity of South African whites alienated by his defiant posturing. Situating participation in the Bantustan scheme within a wider strategy of creating a 'liberated area from which I can engage in the liberation struggle on South African soil,' and offering 'some hope for the Zulu,' Buthelezi claimed that cooperation with South Africa did not signify support of apartheid but rather acquiescence in the only available option: 'What will be more gratifying to us... than to think that we did our best in the circumstances and to the very limit of what was possible?'⁵⁸ Like Transkei, KwaZulu abolished the most obnoxious elements of apartheid. Indeed, demanding a more equitable distribution of South African resources, Buthelezi—unlike Matanzima—balked at independence on the Republic's terms. Eventually, however, KwaZulu reeked of massive political and financial corruption, with Buthelezi in the thrall of a messianic complex and an obsessive concern with status.⁵⁹

As mass resistance to apartheid mounted, Bantustan leaders made common cause with the South African government. Homeland defence forces, trained and equipped by, and pledged to the security of, South Africa, repeatedly clashed with African National Congress guerrillas. Indeed, South Africa's repressive rule was partially concealed behind the veil of 'black-on-black' violence. Bantustans did not serve as a transit point to true emancipation; rather, they proved a major obstacle to it. Calling for the dismantling of apartheid and political reunification with South Africa, even the leaders of the Bantustans ultimately denounced them as a sham.

The Question of Statehood

Edward Said writes that 'there is a gigantic and inherent difference

⁵⁷ Although perhaps sincere, such fulminations also served Matanzima as 'proof' that he was not a South African stooge. For that same reason, South Africa quietly abided them.

⁵⁸ Mare and Hamilton, *An Appetite for Power*, pp. 3, 35–9, see also p. 82: 'We have created a springboard from which we can go forth to conquer in ever widening circles. We have created for our Black South Africa a liberated zone from whence we can mount our strategies and attacks on apartheid which are vital to the country as a whole.' Compare also Butler et al., *The Black Homelands of South Africa*, p. 35, quoting Buthelezi on 'self-rule': 'It may be a contribution to the unravelling of the problem, insofar as, if we attain full independence, our hand will be strengthened.' Echoing Buthelezi's rationale, Arafat told a crowd in Gaza upon his return: 'I know many of you think Oslo is a bad agreement. It is a bad agreement. But it's the best agreement we can get in the worst situation.' And his deputy maintained that Oslo 'will not automatically lead to national independence, but the political space it opens up enables us to set off an irreversible dynamic towards independence through the new national mechanisms we set in place.' Usher, *Palestine in Crisis*, pp. 1, 9–10, see also Said, *Peace and its Discontents*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Even Bophuthatswana, the one Bantustan initially protective of individual rights, ended up as a police state.

between "limited self-rule" and "independence" and that the Oslo accords 'do not include any reference, not one sentence, about the Palestinians' right to self-determination.'⁶⁰ The clear implication is that the crucial issue is Palestinian statehood. This emphasis, I think, is misplaced. If the South African precedent is any guide, Israel *will* eventually grant Palestinians full independence within the patchwork areas of 'self-rule' adumbrated in Oslo II.⁶¹ If cast in terms of statehood, the Palestinian question will then be technically resolved. At any rate, there will be no further basis for complaint.

Yet, even the conservative critique of apartheid was anchored in the more substantive, albeit more abstract, principle of equity: the white regime had engineered an unfair division of South Africa's resources. Consider the argument of a basically sympathetic critic of apartheid. "The principal deficiency," Kenneth Stultz wrote,

is that... no African could see that the whites of South Africa had given up anything of substance in order that Transkei independence should occur. On the contrary, it appeared that the whites had *gained* greater respectability for their exclusion of blacks from equal treatment in the cities. Nor could it be believed that the Transkei representatives enjoyed effective leverage in the negotiations themselves. Certainly Pretoria wished Transkei to seek independence in order to validate its policy of separate development, but there is no evidence that the Vorster government was made to pay a high price to ensure its happening. In short, Transkei independence lacks the legitimizing element of real and material sacrifices on the part of the white population... Although political power has exchanged hands in consequence of Transkei independence, if only the power Transkeians now have... to police themselves and administer their own poverty, there has been no shifting in the ownership of great amounts of wealth.⁶²

Note the issue was *not* that Transkei was a 'neo-colony.' Even if true, it was irrelevant: many an African state, alas, exercised little real independence. Indeed, Stultz was at pains to show that the Transkei state fared no worse economically than neighbouring countries. If Transkei was, by virtue of its material dependence, illegitimate, so were they. Rather, the critical principle for Stultz was equity. True, Transkei's blacks achieved independence. So weak was their bargaining position, however, that South Africa kept for itself everything worth keeping. All Transkeians won was the right to 'police themselves and administer their own poverty.' Bantustanization was, for white South Africans, basically cost-free and therefore unjust.

⁶⁰ Said, *Poets and its Discontents*, pp. 173–4.

⁶¹ This is especially so since pressures will undoubtedly build to 'normalize' the status of Palestinians and a relatively stable Palestinian elite beholden to Israel will undoubtedly crystallize. See the reported view of influential Labour Party 'dove' Yossi Beilin. 'Beilin is not afraid to say that when finally we have the five parameters that Rabin presented in the Knesset—the Jordan river as the security border, no dismantling of any settlement, no return to the 1967 border, Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and no right of Palestinian return—it will be possible to discuss a Palestinian state.' All indications are that Arafat would accept such terms. (*Haaretz*, 29 November 1995; *Yediot Ahronot*, 29 February 1996; *News From Within*, March 1996, pp. 17–18.) After this article was completed, the Labour Party officially dropped its opposition to a Palestinian state.

⁶² Stultz, *Transkei's Half-Leaf*, pp. 133–4; emphasis in the original.

Compare now Meron Benvenisti's authoritative assessment of Oslo:

while Israel is free to act independently in its own sovereign area, it insists on 'coordinating' the usage of natural resources by the Palestinians, so that Israeli interests will not be harmed. This asymmetry perpetuates the existing inequality in the distribution of common natural resources and re-emphasizes the impression of a victor's peace. For the Israelis, it is peace without pain or sacrifice, a bargain proposition.⁶³

Thus, by the standard of even a conservative critique of apartheid, the Oslo accord, even if it culminates in independence for the marginal areas currently reserved for Palestinian 'self-rule,' lacks legitimacy.

Significantly, in the matter of apartheid, the international community acknowledged that the fundamental issue was not statehood but equity. As noted above, no country recognized Transkei's independence. Accordingly, international pressures on the apartheid regime did not relax. Yet, the enthusiastic reception accorded Oslo suggests that equity is no longer a concern of the world community. Recall that the two-state settlement hitherto supported by the global consensus was predicated on a *full* Israeli withdrawal. Such a division was arguably equitable. Israel is now called on to withdraw only from *parts* of the West Bank and Gaza, in effect, the parts it doesn't want.⁶⁴ The PLO's capitulation crucially legitimized this reversal. If Israel eventually grants independence to the hodgepodge areas that now exercise 'self-rule,' the Palestine question will probably be dropped altogether from the international agenda. Palestinians will no longer be able to benefit from the kind of international solidarity that contributed so mightily to the collapse of the apartheid regime.

The Chimera of Separation

The critique of apartheid ultimately rested, however, not on a moral but rather a political, indeed, pragmatic foundation: separation was a pipe dream. 'The theory of apartheid in its pure form,' wrote Christopher Hill,

was that there should be *total* separation of White and Black, the Africans being returned to their Reserves, which though small would become highly industrialized states. Their economies would complement that of White South Africa, which would entirely dispense with African labour and rely for manpower upon greatly increased White immigration.

Yet, the basic premise that the 'existing economic integration between the races can be unscrambled' proved to be—in Hill's word—a

⁶³ Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, p. 222.

⁶⁴ One can argue that the two-state settlement which gave the indigenous Arab population 20 per cent of Mandatory Palestine and the Jewish settlers who displaced them 80 per cent was also far from equitable. My own view was that this proposal was a pragmatic application of justice, that is, an application of Max Weber's formula, 'Given the existing conflict, how can one solve it with the least internal and external damage for all concerned?' (H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York 1975, p. 9.) Granting Palestinians independence in the derisory areas of 'self-rule' sketched in Oslo II cannot, I think, be plausibly justified by any standard of justice.

'fiction.'⁶⁵ South Africa could not free itself of dependence on black labour and the Bantustans could not free themselves of dependence on South African employment and subventions. Every appreciable enterprise in South Africa continued to employ, and relied on the Bantustans as a reservoir for, cheap African labour. On the other side, migrants labouring in South Africa accounted for fully 70 per cent of the gross national income in the Bantustans. Over half of the economically active Transkei male labour force, for instance, was annually recruited for work in the Republic. Without the remittances dispatched home by the migrant workers, the Bantustan economies—such as they were—would have collapsed. Indeed, the Bantustans depended, even after independence, on South African grants for fully 60–80 per cent of even current expenditures.⁶⁶

Israel has been less reliant than South Africa on indigenous labour. Due to Israel's systematic ruination of the West Bank/Gaza economy, Palestinians in these areas are still reliant on work in Israel, a fact highlighted by the devastation wrought on their economy by the current closure. Meron Benvenisti forcefully argues that the Oslo-contrived 'unscrambling' of Israel and Palestine is equally chimeric. The accord, he observes,

provided for the establishment of a permanent committee to supervise cooperation in a long list of areas, such as water, electricity and energy, finance and international investment and banking, the port of Gaza, communication and transport, industry, labour relations, human resources, and protection of the environment. The long list of areas in which cooperation and coordination is essential points to one basic fact that the advocates of 'separation' have yet to grasp: the country, from the Jordan to the sea, can perhaps be divided politically, but not physically.⁶⁷

Indeed, it is uncertain whether the two-state settlement itself was ever feasible. Benvenisti thinks it was not. Noam Chomsky acknowledges that it was 'always a slim possibility,' one which he very reluctantly supported. Although Said clings, throughout most of the book, to the two-state settlement,⁶⁸ there is a notable change of emphasis in the concluding chapter:

Palestine/Israel ... is the place where two peoples, whether they like it or not, live inextricably linked lives, tied together by history, war, daily contact, and suffering.

⁶⁵ Hill, *Bantustans*, pp. 5, 41. It is an open question whether the *apartheid* regime ever actually envisaged a total separation. 'The dominant Republican Afrikaner attitude to race relations', T.R.H. Davenport observes, 'held in tension the conflicting notions of territorial separation (as an insurance against numerical swamping) and domination (*heerskap*) to ensure control over labour.' (*South Africa, A Modern History*, Toronto 1991, p. 518.) At any rate, one cannot but be struck by the identity of socioeconomic visions between the masterminds of apartheid and the Oslo accord. Verwoerd projected 'one national economy [with] the opportunity of separate government, the opportunity of living separately,' while Shimon Peres calls for a 'political divorce and an economic marriage.' Mare and Hamilton, *An Apposite for Power*, p. 30; Usher, *Palestine in Crisis*, p. 35.

⁶⁶ Nearly 10 per cent of the South African budget was earmarked for the Bantustans. 'Rather surprisingly,' reported the authors of one standard study, 'the rapid growth of spending on the homelands ... has not been challenged by white public opinion or politicians.' Butler et al., *The Black Homelands of South Africa*, p. 143.

⁶⁷ Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, p. 221.

⁶⁸ Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, pp. 3, 20, 119, 125. To be sure, Said reports (p. 174) that he too endorsed the two-state settlement with great reservations, although apparently not because of doubts about its viability.

To speak in grandiose geopolitical terms, or to speak mindlessly about 'separating' them is nothing less than to provide prescriptions for more violence and degradation. There is simply no substitute for seeing these two communities as equal to each other in rights and expectations, and then proceeding from there to do justice to their living actualities.⁶⁹

As Said's parting words suggest, the inevitable if very distant future is one in which Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews, enjoying reciprocal communal and individual rights, coexist within a unitary entity. Consigned to a footnote, Oslo will no doubt be dismissed one day as a sordid detour on the path to that just and lasting peace.

The Policy of Encirclement

Finally, Benjamin Netanyahu's victory in the recent Israeli election will not substantively affect the process set in motion at Oslo. Historically, conquest regimes have pursued one or a combination of four options: extermination, enslavement, expulsion, and encirclement. Given the constraints of international politics and morality, the first three options are not, at any rate for the foreseeable future, available to Israel. Accordingly, Labour Party leaders Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres sought to implement the maximum version of the encirclement strategy. A year after Oslo I was signed, Israel's control of West Bank land reached 75 per cent, up from 65 per cent when the accords were signed, and government funding for settlements increased by 70 per cent. The number of settlers in the West Bank and Gaza—not including Jerusalem—increased by 30 per cent in the first three years of Labour rule, through July 1995. Were any of the other options available, there is little reason to doubt that the Labour Party would have pursued them. Certainly there is nothing in the recent, let alone historical, record of Labour to suggest it is averse to deploying violence on a massive scale. Witness Rabin's fully justified boast in the 1988 Israeli election campaign that, 'I, as Defence Minister, expelled more people and blew up more houses than any Likud Defence Minister.' Witness Rabin's murderous rampage in Lebanon in 1993 and Peres's recent replay. The Labour Party did not change in September 1993; the world did. Neither a 'Tasmanian solution' nor a 1948-style mass expulsion—implemented by, among others, Rabin—is a tenable alternative. The optimal variant of the encirclement strategy ratified at Oslo is the most Israel can hope for. Indeed as shown above, Israel gets to keep nearly everything, albeit with the Arabs still in situ. Campaign rhetoric notwithstanding, Netanyahu no doubt knows this. His settlements policy may prove tactically more provocative. The media will perhaps give the new Prime Minister a harder time, wistfully blaming him for the failure of the 'peace that could have been' were the Labour Party still in power. No one privy to the facts will be fooled by these fairy tales.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-4.

review

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The Other Mediterranean

Since the Neolithic agriculturalist revolution, the shores of the Black Sea have been continuously inhabited by linguistically and culturally diverse peoples. In some places ethno-historical continuities are truly staggering, as in the inaccessible valleys of the Caucasus, sheltered from invasions, where natives can make credible—as well as totally incredible—claims that their lineages reach back into the early Bronze Age. The adjacent steppes, on the other hand, have always been exposed to the waves of nomadic tribes coming from Central Asia. These areas are perhaps even more remarkable for the structural continuity of material life despite their changing peoples and fleeting configurations of power. The millennia-old patterns of trade between the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean which had been firmly established by the sixth century BC, if not earlier, underwent cycles of expansion and contraction, yet endured largely unchanged well into the nineteenth century. On the northern shores of the Black Sea we find the succession of archaeological ‘cultures’—that is, peoples whose names we will never learn (they might even include the apparently not-so-legendary Amazons)—and the less chronologically remote and therefore somewhat better-known Maeotians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Khazars, Cumans and Tatars. Even before the arrival of Russians from the north in the eighteenth century—who were themselves prompted by the expanding capitalist world economy in the West—these nomadic or semi-nomadic ‘natives’ of the Eurasian land-mass were regularly confronted by sea-borne traders and occasional conquerors emerging on the other end of what was essentially a commodity chain—Ionian Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Genoese, Ottoman Turks.

Staples like wheat, dried fish and caviar—once so abundant that it was part of the everyday diet—plus furs and hides, salt, wax and honey were continuously exported from the Black Sea in exchange for the sophisticated products of Mediterranean craftsmanship. Another enduring export was slaves, destined for the Mediterranean plantations, Anatolian copper mines, Venetian galleys, Mameluk armies and Ottoman harems. In an ironic imitation of Pax Britannica, Russian cruisers manned largely by serf sailors finally extinguished this age-old trade in the 1830s and in the meantime wrested naval supremacy from the Ottoman empire. Nonetheless, for another century the Black Sea

continued to be one of the world's major exporters of wheat until the lake port of Chicago finally eclipsed Odessa. The Black Sea was and, likely, will be used again, to ship the oil from Baku to the terminals of Novorossiisk and Batumi—in another historical irony, inhabitants of Arabia used Baku kerosene to fuel their lamps until the 1930s.

In a nutshell, the Black Sea is one of the oldest and surely the best integrated periphery of Mediterranean class societies. The latter, exploiting their primogenitor monopoly on literacy, began the tradition of calling themselves 'civilizations', opposing themselves to the 'primeval barbarism' of the periphery. The tradition of describing in terms of innate cultural divides what are actually spatial differences in economic positions and the derivative social composition of local societies certainly remains with us to this day.

Neil Ascherson set himself the almost impossible task of describing the human interactions that produced and sustained this oldest frontier between 'civilization and barbarism'.* Four decades after the appearance of the Fernand Braudel's *Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Ascherson attempted to paint his own grand canvas of another landlocked and densely populated sea basin, blending geography, history, and human experience, broadly defined, into a single narrative. In doing so, he boldly disregarded the mantra of dissertation advisors who urge new generations of researchers to 'focus', to narrow down their topic and get technical. Most wonderfully, Ascherson emerges largely successful from his epic and sentimental journey into the space-time continuum we call the Black Sea. To borrow Ascherson's own words with which he describes the discourse of a Greek itinerant philosopher Dio Chrysostom, one of his vividly portrayed protagonists: 'it is a beautiful, baffling piece of work; it is also an eclectic patchwork...'

Even more incredibly, the book is marvellously detailed and largely accurate, leaving few egregious mistakes or misspellings to the pedants. Of course, a work of this magnitude could not completely avoid errors which lead to somewhat frustrating omissions. For instance, by transforming Nikita Khrushchev into a Ukrainian—he was an ethnic Russian—the author prevents himself from examining the truly puzzling reasons for awarding the Crimea to the Ukraine in 1954. Why indeed would the Soviet leader, an enthusiastic promoter of merging the nationalities in the coming communist society, attempt to play on Ukrainian national sentiment by donating to the Ukrainian SSR a territory ethnically cleansed of its old Ottoman populations by both Hitler and Stalin only a decade before? Why did Khrushchev, reputedly obsessed with correcting Stalin's crimes, force the Crimean Tatars to remain in their Central Asian exile while absolving other—though far from all—nationalities deported in the 1940s? But to blame Ascherson for failing to undertake another trip into historical understanding would be sheer injustice.

The Boers of the North

More seriously, Ascherson's fondness for the epic often leads him to

* Neil Ascherson, *Black Sea*, Jonathan Cape, London 1995, £17.99, ISBN 0-224-04102-9

favour literary images over social history, especially when dealing with such evocative subjects as the Cossacks. In his account of the Cossacks he virtually collapses the early 'primitive rebels' of the Russo-Ottoman frontier, those pirates of the steppe, with the much-feared but stolid, orderly nineteenth-century servicemen-farmers of the Russian empire. Least justifiably of all, he crowns this nearly-extinguished historical lineage with the intrinsically lumpen post-Soviet nationalist movement that has assumed the Cossack name along with First World War uniforms and medals. Yet, Ascherson's admirable attention to detail saves the narrative and provides the reader with a welcome sense of complexity and ambiguity. Although in a somewhat over-romanticized fashion, Ascherson draws parallels between the neo-Cossacks and the unionists in Northern Ireland or the Krajina Serbs, this helps him to illuminate the movement's driving forces and particularly its self-imagery. In adding *Afrikaners* to this list, Ascherson unwittingly follows a century-old tradition. During the Boer War, Russian newspapers went as far as to translate (and transform) the name of their favourite side into *Zavaalskie kazaki*—Beyond-the-Vaal Cossacks. Contemporary Russians, from barely literate peasants to Leo Tolstoy, the prime dissident of the time, and even Tsar Nicholas himself, could not help feeling a deep affinity with the familiar-looking, bearded, patriarchal Boers making their heroic stand against the British empire. Certainly, the Cossacks, those near-native European frontiersmen, caused many a nineteenth-century imperialist headaches. The Russian way of coping with them was curiously un-British—Cossacks were granted lands and tax privileges in exchange for military service thus adding another estate to the imperial edifice, alongside the nobility, the clergy, town dwellers and peasants. The conquered ethnic and religious *morodtsy*, that is aliens—who included most Muslims and Jews—belonged to no particular estate and therefore enjoyed few privileges. They were usually subject to the Cossack policing. One frontier group was used to control the others.

The idea of frontier interaction between core and periphery, or the civilized and the barbarous, is the main theme of Ascherson's Black Sea narrative. He forcefully advances it through a succession of masterfully constructed situations involving Milesian colonies and Roman imperial outposts, the Byzantine monastic realm around Trebizond and the Genoese entrepôt fortresses on the edge of the Mongol empire, roving Russian Cossacks and Crimean Tatars, Gothic invaders and elusive Scythians. The idea of the Black Sea origins of the dichotomy between civilization and barbarism, frontier and empire, is not as far fetched as some earlier reviewers have suggested. Undoubtedly, frontiers existed elsewhere in the world, to the north of imperial China, in north and east Africa, or in western Europe itself. Power, accrued in the centres of historical systems, invariably produced cultural arrogance and a sense of innate supremacy which could not be unsettled by the occasional military victories scored by the peripheries. Yet it was in the Black Sea that the idea of an unbridgeable rift first crystallized in the minds of ancient Greeks—as in Ascherson's Herodotus, quite possibly himself an imperial politician. This fundamental opposition was later inherited by modern Europeans as part and parcel of their claim to the legacy of Graeco-Roman antiquity. The modern European claim was powerfully construed to exclude other possible claims, most notably Arabic and

Turkish. These 'Orientals' were seen as the destroyers of the Hellenistic Near East and, later, Byzantium rather than their inheritors with much more direct lineages than the former barbarian inhabitants from the provinces of Gallia, Germania and Britannia. When the western European frontier of antiquity itself became the centre of modern world civilization, the Black Sea was no longer a frontier. By the mid-nineteenth century it was incorporated into the capitalist world-economy as its periphery, fully encompassed by modern state borders.

Modern states extinguished the old frontiers but not the memories of their now mythical past. It was this often nostalgic past that became a gold mine of images for modern nationalists. The second most important line of Ascherson's inquiry is arguably nationalism. To be sure, it is subtly intertwined with the concepts of barbarism and civilization. With numerous, highly picturesque examples, Ascherson seeks to follow the processes by which former barbarians imagined themselves as nations and thus laid claim to civilization. In the meantime, the plural multi-ethnic societies of the Black Sea underwent drastic simplification, not unlike that caused in the complex and fragile ecosystems of the Sea by the recent invasions of rapacious molluscs and ctenophore introduced from the ballast tanks of freighters. In the wake of the stunning implosion produced by the Soviet collapse, conflicting nationalist causes have immensely advanced the trend towards ethnic homogenization—one might say anthropological impoverishment—alongside the state fragmentation. Abkhazia, where in 1993 the Abkhaz aborigines, 17 per cent of the population, managed—with some help from the Russian military—to drive out the Georgians who had constituted nearly 50 per cent of the pre-war population, is only one of the more poignant examples. Ascherson does not espouse any of the numerous, currently flourishing theories of nationalism. Rather, he offers us one of the best descriptions of East European nationalism available to date. His account is always wonderfully nuanced and subtle. Ascherson is capable of achieving a depth of intuitive understanding that can hardly be overvalued in unsettled times when empires, scholarly theories, and grand ideologies go bankrupt almost overnight. Aside from the sheer pleasure in following Ascherson's story-telling, his intuitive sense of eclectic, changing, yet strangely enduring reality is the main reason to appreciate this book.

Love's Work

'As a form of counter-desolation,' Ricoeur tells us, 'consolation can be a lucid manner—just as lucid as Aristotelian *katharsis*—of mourning for oneself. Here, too, a fruitful exchange can be established between literature and being-toward-death.'¹

The consolation which Ricoeur primarily has in mind is that which comes from reading in fiction of the determinate deaths of others as we approach our own unknown and as yet unspecified end—though he also mentions the solace to the believer of the meditation on the Passion of Christ. But autobiography, too, can figure as a form of mourning for the self: both in the sense that it represents an attempt to record—and thus permit lament for—the passing of a life as it was subjectively experienced; and in the sense that it might seem to offer some means of defining and hence controlling the form in which one will be subsequently remembered.

Such consolation is of its nature limited since, just as there is no escape from death itself, so there is no final escape from the judgement of others upon the life—including upon any autobiographical records one may choose to bequeath. We cannot be in attendance at our own wake; cannot hope finally to fix the forms of our own reception, nor avoid the irksome truth that in any record we leave of our lives we shall betray more of our selfhood than we ourselves are sensitive to.

Gillian Rose, writing in the knowledge of her imminent death from cancer, was aware, so it seems to me, of these paradoxes of autobiographical consolation, and chose to deal with them neither by attempting to say everything, nor by pretending to less ego than she possessed, but simply by saying what it pleased her to say, and leaving, as she inevitably had to, the ultimate words of grief, praise, blame or exasperated expostulation to her survivors. The result is a powerful and unsentimental chronicle, which interweaves an uncompromising and acerbically edited version of the self with a pared-to-the-bone ethic of work, love and pessimism owing a good deal to her own favoured mentors, Hegel, Benjamin and Adorno.

Rose does not, in fact, directly refer us to Hegel, but it was he who wrote, in exposition of his 'Master-Slave' dialectic, that only work can annul the

¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, Chicago 1992, p. 162.

terror experienced at the threat of death. In Kojève's paraphrase of the argument, 'only work, by finally putting the objective World into harmony with the subjective idea that at first goes beyond it, annuls the element of madness that marks the attitude of every man who—driven by terror—tries to go beyond the given World of which he is afraid, in which he feels terrified, and in which, consequently, he could not be satisfied.'²

For Rose, this is, as she explains in *Love's Work*—itself an oeuvre, an actual work of transformation in and of the world—a work of love.³ It is so, she implies, firstly in the sense that only a mundane and mortal love will do to keep you going. Only a consuming erotic passion, uneven, untimely and ultimately hopeless as it may well be—and that recounted in this work is of that order—will keep you on the rails, save you from the spurious salvations and their associated forms of narcissism (the kind of 'works' on the self recommended by the advocates of alternative medicine, the spiritual healers and their quack remedies for the soul). Only the ongoing engagement in the agon of life, together with all its agonies will allow you—to quote the saying of Staretz Silouan which is the epigram to the book—to 'Keep your mind in hell, and despair not'. For it is, suggests Rose, the 'deadly blandishments of the exoteric language of cosmic love' which offer the more despairing counsel, precisely because they would attempt to keep the mind *out* of hell:

While presenting itself as a post-Judaic, New Age Buddhism, this spirituality reinsinuates the most remorseless protestantism. It burdens the individual soul with an inner predestination: you have eternal life only if you dissolve the difficulty of living, of love, of self and other, of the other in the self, if you are translucent, without inner or outer boundaries.⁴

By contrast, for Rose—reaching for her favourite whisky and telling her 'valetudinarian well-wishers' to imbibe the shark's oil and aloe vera themselves—it is only if you can accept the boundaries of self and others, can accept that there is no love without power, and no life in which you do not continue to go wrong in love while continuing to woo, that you hope to escape the damnation of 'cosmic emptiness', of 'the repose without the revel'.

Embracing the Unwanted

But the work which keeps terror at bay is also a work of love in a second, more Stoical sense, that you come to embrace the initially unwanted thus gaining a certain control over it. Control here means that:

when something untoward happens, some trauma or damage, whether inflicted by the commissions or omissions of others, or some cosmic force, one makes the

² Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, London 1969, pp. 26–7.

³ Gillian Rose, *Love's Work*, Chatto and Windus, London 1995, ISBN 0-7011-6304-6, £9.99. Gillian Rose (1947–1995) is also the author of *The Melancholy Science*, London 1978; *Hegel Contra Sociology*, London 1981; *Dialectic of Nihilism: Poststructuralism and Law*, Oxford 1984; *Judaism and Modernity*, Oxford 1991; *The Broken Middle*, Oxford 1992 and, posthumously, *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation*, Cambridge 1996.

⁴ Rose, *Love's Work*, p. 98.

initially unwelcome event one's own inner occupation. You work to adopt the most loveless, forlorn, aggressive child as your own, and do not leave her to develop into an even more vengeful monster, who constantly wishes you ill. In ill-health as in unhappy love, this is the hardest work: it requires taking in before letting be.⁵

The trauma or damage in this particular instance was the post-operative news that her cancer had shown marked 'progression' and it had proved therefore impossible to remove the colostomy. Rose presents a welcome to the colostomy in the form of a lyric upon this 'surrogate rectum and anus' and its burnished extrusions which she dryly suggests must go some way to correct its absence hitherto from the 'romance of world literature.'

It is but one episode in a broader rectification she provides. For no one surely has written about their cancer to date with quite this verve and irony. Rose had a novelist's gift for observation, and the portraits of her consultants, Mr Wong and Mr Bates, and their rivalries—and extraordinary disputes over the reading of her entrails—are among the best and most entertaining sections of her book:

An unknown man, dressed in brightly coloured sports clothes (it was a Sunday) was bouncing up and down beside my cot. He enquired breezily, 'How are you, young lady?' Through the haze of pain, I replied with outrage, 'How dare you call me "young lady",' and demanded that the intruder introduce himself. This act of gross impropriety on my part in the mode of address, or rather, return of address to a very senior consultant surgeon, who, moreover, like Mr Wong and the anaesthetist, was treating me gratis in a private hospital, enhanced my kudos in Mr Wong's eyes, and he took every opportunity to remind me of this picaresque solecism. Mr Bates and I became wary sparring partners. I always greeted him with the appellation 'Young Man', and I presented him with unwanted volumes of Marx so that he might correct the vulgarity of his right-wing misapprehensions of the socialist theory of politics and society.⁶

When first told of her disease, Rose protests that she is the happiest and healthiest person she knows—and I suppose, at least in respect of the happiness, that this is the kind of incorrigible sentiment one has to believe. Yet the sources of this happiness seem to have resided more in the work performed on adversity than in its avoidance. At any rate, buoyant and deft as the writing remains, there seems rather little in the way of joyous good fortune here that she chooses to recount at any great length, and any number of diabolisms and harrowing episodes to add to the inner circle of her own illness.

Their narrative moves continuously back and forth in time and between the actual cities of London, Oxford, New York, and Warwick, where most of her time was spent, and the more metaphoric space of what she calls her three Cities of Death—New York, Auschwitz, Jerusalem. The impact of the Holocaust on family and friends reverberates throughout. (Rose's maternal grandmother lost fifty members of her family; Rose returns at a number of points to its legacy, and offers a haunting account of a visit she paid to Poland as adviser to a Commission on the Future of

⁵ Ibid., p. 91

⁶ Ibid., pp 92–3.

Auschwitz). Jerusalem and New York are associated with the lives and deaths of some of her closest friends, the concupiscent Yvette, Jim, pianist philosopher and AIDS victim, and the improbable Edna, still surviving at ninety-six a cancer first diagnosed when she was sixteen, albeit noseless. 'These lives, these deaths,' writes Rose, 'like mine, come to me on the analogy from Plato between *the soul* and *the city*: The souls across the century, and the cities across the centuries.'

From Stone to Rose

We read here, too, of the unhappiness of a childhood beset by the four 'imps', 'Im', 'A', 'Di' and 'Dys', ('Immigration', 'Atheism', 'Divorce' and 'Dyslexia'); of the disowning (though surely it was in some sense mutual?) by her own father (hard, cold, 'wicked', name of Stone) when she changed her name to that of her stepfather (warm, witty, 'good', name of Rose); of the subsequent attempted—or rather, as she emends it, 'advertised'—suicides of mother and stepfather during a bleak first year at Oxford (it seems they phoned her up to say farewell); of the failed love affairs and their bitter aftermath ('I am highly qualified in unhappy love affairs,' she archly pronounces as prologue to their narrative). But the contradiction between the assessment of her own felicity and these sources of distress is never explored. One has a sense, in fact, that, in matters of love, Rose may have derived more from the troubled than the tranquil affair. And there is, one feels, something disproportionate, whose reasons are not acknowledged or repressed, in the space devoted to the more eccentric, surreal or macabre—and in some cases relatively transient—episodes and characters in her life, relative to that accorded to those with whom, on her own admission, she enjoyed the most extended and rewarding relations.

Towards the end of *Love's Work*, the more strictly autobiographical narrative gives way to philosophical commentary. This is in part about the nature and role of philosophy itself, in part defending what may broadly be termed a critical-theory perspective on reason against the universalizing pretensions of an uncritical Enlightenment, on the one hand, and postmodernist relativism and irrationalism, on the other. The tone is a little prim, the analogies invoked not entirely convincing, though one would not quarrel with the overall message. Philosophy, Rose tells us, in an Arthurian version of its origins, is born of the sadness of King Arthur, who cannot be obedient both to the law of the Round Table and to the dictate of his desire to spare Guinevere and Lancelot. It is the ineluctable irresolution between universal and particular, the discrepancy between abstract and concrete. But the postmodernists cannot see this or accept it. For them, philosophy is founded on the totalitarian ideal of Camelot and therefore to be rejected outright as the ruin of modern life.

More banally, the postmodernists' misguided censorship of rationality is compared to the 'enlightened probity' which hopes to eradicate war and aggression by preventing children from playing with guns and other violent toys. In both cases, she suggests, you will only aggravate the propensities you are hoping to deter, because in both cases you remove the experience of conflict between fantasy and reality, thought and being, ideas and their realization. Even if Rose is right about the counter-

productive effects of banning war toys, which is doubtful, it is not clear—mainly, I think, because she does not say enough about the propensities the postmodernists are attempting to deter—what this comparison is intended to illustrate. Presumably the point here is that if you attempt to ban reason you end up with a form of reason all the more frightening for its failure to distinguish its opposite.

One can readily agree with Rose, however, when she accuses the postmodernists who would reject philosophy of an idealist inflation of its importance through which they have degraded the independence of political realities and contingencies. The main reason we need philosophy, she argues, is precisely to remind us of the gap between fantasy and actuality, the distortion between ideas and their realization. To suppose otherwise is to misunderstand the authority of reason, which is not 'the mirror of the dogma of superstition, but risk. Reason, the critical criterion, is forever without ground.'

At the same time, she recognizes that when Enlightenment reason seeks to sweep away all difference and particularity, it merely masks its own origin in partiality, and must thus be viewed as an 'ambidexter instrument for affecting the irrational'. The resulting struggle between opposing authorities—or, what comes to the same thing, forms of scepticism towards authority—can be resolved only by making a virtue out of the limitations of knowledge itself. Rose accepts that you can challenge the authority of, say, patriarchy only immanently, only that is by appealing to the transcendent rationality sustained within patriarchal culture itself. Reason in this sense is always 'protestant', always engaged in exposing its earlier authority, its own boundaries and limitations. But her suggestion is, if I understand her, that this form of 'protestantism' which endorses critical reason should remain counterposed to today's 'baroque' postmodernist stage of protestantism, which calls upon reason to abandon any claims to rule.

In the midst of her defence of philosophy, Rose delivers herself of a vitriolic attack on her tuition in the subject at Oxford, notably that offered by her teacher, Jean Austin, the widow of J.L. Austin: 'Jean Austin had published a paper on "The Meaning of Happiness", for which she was well qualified in her aura of tense dejection, chain-smoking with shaky hands, her nails stained orange with nicotine.' Furthermore, she did not think females could be trusted to read philosophy, to play the game. Her fear was that her girls might believe themselves more intelligent than the philosophers they were studying, or, worse still, that philosophy had some substance exceeding the ideas injected by her husband. It is a brilliant and merciless portrait of sisterly misogyny. But it is also one which jars somewhat with one of the final messages of the book, namely that feminism has been of no use to her at any point in her life.

Her reasons, it seems, are that feminism has dwelt too much on the powerlessness rather than the power of women, and that it has not been able to understand the nature of love between the sexes, particularly the kind of relations she as an older woman has had with younger men. At the same time, however, feminism is charged with not equipping her, despite her independence, experience and creativity, with the strategies

with which to cope with the withdrawal of love. But this is surely to offer a rather condescendingly simple version of feminist argument, not all of which is as quite as glib and chirpily irrelevant to the real conditions of life and love as she here implies, even if it has issued in some sanctimonious tracts. More importantly, perhaps, her complaints seem based on a rather naïve misconception of the aims, purposes and criteria of success of the feminist movement. Who, in other words, ever thought that feminism could provide the guidance and succour against the travails of love she suggests it can and should?

The argument on feminism is one of a number of rather inward, gnomic and contestable passages in *Love's Work*. In sections such as this, it is as if Rose is communicating essentially only with those who knew her personally rather than with a wider public. But for the most part this is a book which is wonderfully open and lucid given the complex and often intensely private nature of its message; and which—despite all the mental and physical pain which finds expression in it—burns with its own forms of radiance and hope. For those who can appreciate the reasons for 'keeping the mind in hell', this is a work to help remedy the despair.

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Who Really Owns Big Business

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- Despite the collapse of the Soviet bloc and a wave of privatization throughout the capitalist world, some forms of social ownership are very much on the increase. Richard Minns points out that pension funds now control assets equivalent to the total value of shares quoted on the world's three leading exchanges. In Britain and the US, most employees are now involved in funded pension schemes following the running down of public pension provision. Minns points out that organized labour has been offered, or has asked for, the allocation of shares in lieu of wage increases; he also shows that these schemes have typically conferred only a second-rate form of ownership. More far-reaching attempts to achieve socialization through 'wage earner' funds, as in Sweden, have run into stiff and successful resistance.
- In the UK and the US the huge importance of pension funds may have widened indirect ownership but it has also aggravated the characteristic ills of the Anglo-American model of 'punter capitalism' based upon short-term speculation. Minns argues that pension funds could be a powerful lever for promoting active ownership so that they could be regulated by clear social guidelines; for this a version of Sweden's original Meidner plan is still the best starting point.

New Labour seeks to appease business interests and press proprietors, so any hint that its 'stakeholder economy' might resemble a Meidner plan has been studiously avoided—instead a new 'business culture' will be built by exhortation. David Coates argues that New Labour is less new than it claims, being a recycled version of the pre-Bennite Old Labour of the Wilson and Callaghan years. The arbiters of the promised 'modernization' seem likely once more to be the City, the Treasury and international finance. Now, as then, no alternative bloc of forces has been assembled capable of defying this familiar lineup. New Labour's strategists hope that by talking down expectations they can forestall disillusion. Yet they still promise 'national renewal', and 'a new Britain, for a new generation'. If they fail, they will face pressure not only from their followers, who are often treated with disdain, but from other political and social forces without loyalty to Labour, Old or New. The article we publish from Conrad Russell, a Liberal Democrat spokesperson, shows that New Labour is now vulnerable to radical critique from this quarter, just as it is in Scotland to the SNP.

Jürgen Habermas's fascinating comparison of the problems of German national unification and the prospects for unification in Korea was delivered as a lecture in Seoul. He insists that such an exercise should be undertaken cautiously since the condition of the two countries, despite some evident parallels, is marked by no less striking contrasts. North Korea is relatively larger than was East Germany, and considerably more autonomous, rendering the potential strains of any rapid unification all the greater. In the natural euphoria of reuniting a severed country, there can be the danger that the ethnos of fellow countrymen eclipses the demos of citizens, with authoritarian consequences. And, speaking of the German experience, he warns that a unification pressed through at the level of the elites, without adequate popular debate, can bequeath a legacy of resentment. Paik Nak-chung, editor of the Korean journal *Creation and Criticism*, responds to Habermas's lecture with some observations about the circumstances in which the division of Korea, one of the last direct geopolitical legacies of the Cold War, might be overcome.

Following the article by Dave Beech and John Roberts in the last issue, Malcolm Bull asks what a systematic philistinism might actually involve. Arguing that other radical negations, such as atheism and anarchism, were conceived of long before anyone held them as beliefs, he identifies philistinism as currently being in just this position. Since Marxism has had a strong relation to these other negations, Bull provocatively suggests that we might rethink its relation to a radical philistinism.

John Frow analyses the increasing commodification of information, raising issues of the boundaries between commodity and gift, the public and the private. He shows how copyright has been extended to include the patenting of plant species, with only the most minor of modifications, removing their ownership from the communities which have fostered and selected them over generations. In documenting the deprivation of the common owners of such 'products' to the right to freely dispose of them, he argues for a greater space for the exercise of customary social rights.

Robert Pollin reviews Giovanni Arrighi's *The Long Twentieth Century*, praising its scope but raising questions about some of its methods and conclusions, while Jack Goody assesses Wally Secombe's two-volume history of the European family. We conclude the issue with two sets of comments on previous articles. Lin Chun and Michael Kenny reply to the reviews of their books by Fred Inglis and Dorothy Thompson; Robert Conquest briefly replies to R.W. Davies's article on forced labour in the Soviet Union in NLR 214, and Davies responds.

National Unification and Popular Sovereignty

Since the collapse of the Soviet empire, new states have been emerging in fast-moving sequence—whether through the secession of formerly ‘autonomous’ territories, or through the reunification of national states that had fallen into dependence and partition.* These would appear to be only the clearest symptoms that a phenomenon more or less forgotten, or anyway neglected, in postwar Europe has plenty of life left in it. A colleague of mine describes the situation as follows: ‘With the break-up of the imperial realms, the world of states is re-forming at borders marked by the origins of those states, whose contours are to be explained in national-historical terms.’¹ Today, the political future again seems to belong to the ‘ancestral powers’—primarily, religion and the nation. In the social sciences, the talk is of ‘ethno-nationalism’ which is a way of stressing a common heritage, whether in the physical sense of common descent or in the broader sense of a common cultural tradition.

* This is the text of the Tkeo-nam lecture delivered at Seoul National University, May 1996.

¹ H. Lubbe, *Abschied vom Suprematism*, Berlin 1994, pp. 33f.

An exception to this trend is the continuing division of the Korean nation.

This, no doubt, is the background to the request made by my hosts, to discuss the meaning of national sovereignty through the example of the German unification process, and to explain the problems that arose during the restoration of national unity. I must say in advance that I am no expert in contemporary history or political science, and that my competence is at most that of an attentive newspaper reader and of someone interested in the times in which he lives. But I can well see that the parallels between the postwar histories of our two countries, as well as certain analogies in the relationship between South and North Korea and between West and East Germany, make it seem desirable to examine whether Korea can learn something—and if so, what—from the example of Germany.

The most important aspects are already known to you. The division of the German and Korean nations was a consequence of that antagonism between the two world powers, the USA and the USSR, which came to the fore soon after the end of the Second World War. In Europe, after the defeat of the German Reich, partition naturally enough affected the party with the main guilt for the war, whereas in Asia, after the defeat of Japan, one of the victims freed from Japanese colonial rule was unjustly forced to suffer again alongside it. The Republic of Korea in the South and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the North were proclaimed within a month of each other in 1948, and this was followed a year later, in the same order, by the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany in the West and the German Democratic Republic in the East. Strategically speaking, South Korea and West Germany were advance posts of the American protector. In a similar way in both countries, the ideological and military confrontation between the blocs overshadowed *internal* political contradictions stemming from the past—colonial rule or the Nazi period. This explains the continuity of leading personnel before and after 1945. Just as a large part of the old Nazis were taken into the new regime under Adenauer, so in Korea collaborators with the Japanese occupation authority were largely able to keep their positions under Syngman Rhee. Here, however, what fortunately remained a cold war in Germany escalated into open military conflict. The Korean War left behind a trauma which strained relations with the Communists in the North considerably more than anti-communism strained relations, in our case, with the rulers of the GDR. Nevertheless, the détente of the early seventies under Nixon had similar effects on both fronts. The joint communiqué on the reunification of Korea was signed by the two governments at the same time that the Basic Treaty between the two German governments was negotiated under Willy Brandt. The two Korean states, which intensified contacts with each other after 1989, were finally admitted to the United Nations only in 1991—as the two German states had already been before. Of course, the recent growth of tensions shows that national unification—which, as it were, fell into the lap of the citizens of the old Federal Republic at a lucky moment of world history—confronts the citizens of the Republic of Korea with a rather complicated task. Clearly North Korea, with its pressure for a peace treaty with the United States, is for the moment seeking to keep the partition in place.

After the end of the confrontation between the world powers, national unification seemed in Korea, too, to be politically within reach. At first sight, the state of things here between the North and the South seemed to be like that which existed between the West and the East in Germany. In 1989, a constitutional state stood facing an authoritarian state based upon surveillance of the population; on the one side, a dynamic, growing (despite conjunctural downturns), export-oriented economy, and on the other side, a centrally administered, unproductive system incapable of learning from experience. In Korea, a similar contrast still exists between a political system which since the late eighties has at least opened itself to democratization, and a regime which, even after the death of Kim Il Sung, does not seem to have lost much of its authoritarian character and which, even without China's support, behaves in an aggressive manner. In a certain sense, the economic opposition is also repeated here—between a fast-moving export-oriented economy with high rates of growth, and an inefficient planned economy struggling with major supply problems and stagnating under the weight of its military expenditure. In short, this constellation gave rise in 1989 to the hope of a knock-on effect. Questions were then posed about the most suitable moment, the right political framework and procedure for such a unification: whether sooner or later, whether to make a merger of states or a confederation, whether there should be rapid absorption of the other part or a slow growing together. There were naturally also concrete questions about the policies that should be pursued to achieve this or that goal.

You will, of course, not expect me to answer these directly political questions, simply because I lack the necessary knowledge to give advice on policy. But there are also other reasons why caution is in order. The analogies that occur to us when we consider the postwar destinies of our two countries, both marked by a bipolar world order, tend to obscure from us a number of deeper structural differences. This is why we should be wary of rash extrapolations from the experiences of Germany. I shall now take things in three steps. First, I would like to recall the *different starting-points* that existed or still exist for national unification in Germany and in Korea. Then we shall move on to a problem which is very significant in Europe but perhaps in a different way in Asia: that is, *the relationship between the national state and democracy*. In the light of these considerations, it may be possible to learn something for a future reunification of Korea from *Germany's experience of a rapid, if not over-hasty, process of unification*.

1. The Different Starting-Points

Let us first compare the People's Republic of Korea and what used to be the German Democratic Republic. One of the distinguishing features of the former is its relatively greater share of the total population; less than a fifth of the German total lives in the Eastern *Länder*. North Korea has also preserved a relatively greater political independence, and the '*juche*' principle affirms a certain ideological and political autonomy vis-à-vis both Russia and China. For example, the People's Republic kept its distance from Russian policy in Vietnam and Afghanistan as well as from the Chinese Cultural Revolution, whereas the GDR, if only for geopolitical reasons, always played the role of a Soviet satellite. As

to economics, the GDR was also firmly linked into the Eastern Bloc division of labour. Its leading cadre staunchly followed Moscow's general line, and only in the mid-eighties—from fear of the destabilizing effects of Gorbachev's *glasnost*—did they more clearly display a wish for national autonomy.

For our purposes, another aspect is obviously more important. What collapsed with the Soviet empire was the alternative model of society that had been the only possible *raison d'être* for a second German state. The GDR lost the justification for its existence when bureaucratic socialism fell apart. North Korea, on the other hand, even after 1989–90, has maintained together with China—that is, with China's course towards a 'socialist market economy'—an alternative to the Western growth model which for the time being offers it an orientation. Despite acute bottlenecks, it is thus able to distinguish itself to some extent from the Japanese path of development. I do not at all mean that the North Korean regime is particularly stable; the recent provocations rather suggest the opposite. But an *inevitable* implosion for endogenous reasons appears less likely than in the case of the GDR. If this is correct, then one thing clearly follows: the prospect of a non-violent self-transformation or dissolution of the People's Republic will largely depend on how much citizens in the North—when the time comes—are attracted not only by the economic successes of the South, but also by its social relations and political freedoms.

Today's South Korea can be compared to the earlier Federal Republic no more than North Korea to the GDR. I am not thinking now of such things as the level of social development or the economic balance-sheet. In view of the considerable transfer-payments that flow from the West to the new German *Länder*, many may wonder whether the power of South Korea is sufficient to cope with the adjustment of North Korea to the conditions of a capitalist economic system. But this is not, in my view, the decisive question. Indeed, the South's dramatic leap since the early sixties, from an agrarian society to an industrially developed one, has no parallel in any country larger than a city-state and compels our admiration.² On a comparison of the most important indicators—such as the rate of urbanization, or the changing share of employment in the main sectors of the economy (the development of the service society), or the shifts in the social structure with the emergence of a widespread new middle layer—it can be seen that South Korea really has followed the well-known pattern of social modernization. But whereas this transformation took Germany well over a century, South Korea has managed it within the space of one generation. Such a compressed structural change must be experienced by those involved in it as a sudden and radical shake-up. The unprecedented mobilization of social energies and reserves—of intelligence and labour-power, capital and goods, flows of population, communications and commodities—is naturally the result of a collective effort of the whole population. But, particularly under

² See Han Sang-Jin, 'Economic Development and Democracy: Korea as a New Model?', *Korea Journal*, no. 35, Summer 1995, pp. 5–17; and 'The Rush to Industrialization and its Pathological Consequences', paper for the Sixth International Conference of Asian Sociology, Beijing, November 1995.

President Park, this effort was politically directed and stimulated by an authoritarian state bureaucracy, ambitious, geared to growth, insensitive to the social costs of exploitation, heedless of civil rights, and not immune to corruption. It was a different situation from the one that developed in the Federal Republic.

In West Germany, the capacity destroyed during the war had only to be rebuilt for the dynamic of economic growth to be set in motion. Moreover, the 'economic miracle' could take place within the framework of a democratic, law-based state desired by the Allies. Under these favourable conditions, people grew used to liberal institutions within the course of a single generation; the pre-political trust that a functioning system arouses was converted into political identification with the order and normative content of the Bonn constitution. At any event, by 1989 a political culture had developed which was decidedly more liberal than in Adenauer's time. Since the fifties it had been possible to create rights to public provision, to build up and consolidate social-security systems. In a climate loosened by the student revolt, even the reform initiatives of the SPD-liberal coalition gained widespread acceptance. This gave people the feeling that political participation pays off in the use-values of democratically achieved social and cultural rights, that citizenship can mean more than mere nationality. Citizenship, actively employed, is then experienced not as membership of an organization but as membership in a polity that lets no one slip through the net and excludes no one from the enjoyment of equal rights or from their share in socially produced well-being. In other words, only the welfare state guarantees the real value of equal subjective rights. The citizens of our prosperous OECD societies realize this all the more today, when the welfare state is threatened by the pressure of a global economy. But only with the help of such a well-meshed social net can the democratic state keep its promise to establish ties of solidarity, through abstract legal relations, among citizens who are strangers to one another.

Modernization and Civil Society

I stress this socially integrative function of citizenship because it seems to me important for a country such as South Korea, which has to cope with the legacy of a growth-orientated dictatorship. Two trends collide here, and they reinforce each other in a vicious circle unless they are checked and reversed through a democratically active civil society. On the one hand, accelerated industrialization has forcibly compressed the processes of social modernization so that many continuities have been broken and broad layers have experienced the wrenching of traditions as a loss of roots. In this way, rapid strides in development take their toll in the form of social pathologies which emerge when old forms of social integration break down and ~~new~~ social ties do not appear in their place. On the other hand, however, these anomic tendencies strike hardest where social uprooting is the reverse side of a successful policy of development driven by authoritarian means. For it is then that the effective use of civil rights is most sorely lacking—rights which might replace the worn safety-nets of the traditional forms of life. An authoritarian regime blocks up the sources of a democratically mobilized civil society from which the more abstract forms of legally mediated solidarity among citizens spring. The

only way out of this dilemma is a continuation of the democratization process initiated from above after the end of the military dictatorship and since then energetically driven also from below.

With regard to the goal of national unity, progressive democratization has a *twofold* advantage: it makes living conditions more attractive for fellow-countrymen in the North, while in the South it initially strengthens cohesion so much that the liberal model of society is able to bear the mental and economic strains of a unification process. In this country, fortunately, the democratic forces—starting with the university—which are breathing life into civil society are also the national forces which are promoting reunification. My argument is essentially that progressives must firmly associate the political goal of national unity with the idea of making civil liberties a reality. Only such a package will counteract the danger of a nationalism which is prepared, if need be, to sacrifice political freedoms to national unity.

The mentality of what are called 'progressives' brings us on to a further difference between our two countries. In Korea, where there is the memory of Japanese imperialism, political and social criticism can also turn outward and combine with a strong national consciousness. In the Federal Republic, by contrast, there are good grounds for remembering the crimes of full-blooded nationalism in one's own country. A German has good historical reasons to be cautious in handling national themes; it is no accident that the slogan of a 'self-conscious nation' has been commandeered by the New Right since 1989.

Another reason why a politics geared to Korean reunification arouses so little disquiet in this part of the world is that the external political conditions for such an objective are rather favourable. The unification of Germany could sometimes be perceived by its neighbours as a danger to the precarious balance within the European Union—and not at all only because of the demographic weight of a population of some eighty million. But since 1990, when it regained full sovereignty from the Second World War victors, the enlarged Federal Republic has resisted the temptation to strive once more for the geopolitically natural role of a central power holding supremacy within Europe. Otherwise, the already endangered project of European unity would have run aground on the reefs of national self-interest. Such a danger could not arise from the state unity of the Korean nation. To be sure, as foreign policy becomes more directly based upon economics, the Asian countries, too, are strengthening their cooperation within the Pacific area. As we saw most recently in Bangkok, they already face Europeans to some extent as an alliance. But, unlike in the German case, a unification of Korea would not necessarily be felt by its neighbours as a disturbing factor, even if decisions made by the Republic of Korea within the field of tension between Japan and China are already playing an important role.

As the starting-points in Korea and Germany differ in so many respects, we should not pitch the comparisons at too concrete a level if they are to have instructive value. Allow me, therefore, to move to a somewhat more abstract level and to examine from a certain historical distance the question of how national state and democracy are related to each other.

2. The National State and Democracy

The efforts to strengthen the European Union, as well as the tendencies observable elsewhere towards supranational combinations, make us aware that state sovereignty and unity of the national state no longer mean the same as they have done over the past two centuries. The global integration of the economy, communications and transport creates problems of such a magnitude, and produces risks of such a scope, that they go far beyond the range of action by national governments. The new challenges can no longer be tackled through the classical forms of cooperation and treaties among the sovereign subjects of international law. Rather, they call for actors with political power at the level of regional regimes, which can thus also provide effective support for the United Nations. At the same time, however, we see in Europe that national states display a great force of inertia in the face of these imperatives. This may be understandable in view of the historical success of this form of state organization which has by now spread throughout the world. But the resistance to new post-national forms of sociation also feeds off dubious themes that are bound up with the formative history of the national state in Europe. The conception that modern nations have of themselves has always been ambivalent—and it still is today. On the one hand, Europeans hesitate on the threshold of political union, because they fear that each nation might lose its distinguishing features and cultural life. On the other hand, they experience again—in the mirror of ethnic wars and cleansing in the former Yugoslavia—the tragedies which they know from their own history. The catastrophic consequences of a politics inflamed by fundamentalist nationalism did eventually, after the Second World War, give an impetus to the unification of Europe. Allow me, then, to recall *from a European viewpoint* a conclusion gained at great cost and with great difficulty—namely, that where there is a conflict between the two, the 'demos' of citizens should take precedence over the 'ethnos' of fellow countrymen.

Of course, modern societies continue to distinguish themselves from one another as 'nations', but this does not yet tell us anything about the character of their national consciousness. There remains the empirical question of whether, and to what extent, modern peoples conceive of themselves more as a nation of *citizens* or of fellow *countrymen*. This Janus-face of national consciousness in Europe is to be explained by historical reasons. One of the characteristics of national identity, as a formation of modern consciousness, is its tendency to overcome older particularist ties associated with regions. In nineteenth-century Europe, the new form of the nation established a different bond of solidarity between individuals who had hitherto been strangers to one another. The 'nation' in the modern sense remodelled traditional loyalties—towards village and family, region and dynastic ruler, towards ties ascribing origins in general—in a universalist direction. This was a long-term process which, even in the classical nation-states of the West, probably did not encompass and penetrate the whole population until the early part of the twentieth century.

The fact remains, however, that this more abstract form of integration referred to a particular community—to the nation. This quantity had a

thoroughly artificial character: that is, it had been *simply imagined* as a natural community of language and descent, and at the same time narratively *constructed* as a common historical destiny. Membership of such a nation was supposed to manifest itself above all in the readiness for combat and self-sacrifice of national servicemen who could be mobilized against the 'enemy of the fatherland'. In situations of emergency, citizens' solidarity would prove itself in the solidarity of those who risked their life for people and country. In this way, national consciousness shifted between expanded inclusion and renewed exclusion. The 'nation', opening itself internally and closing itself to the outside, was at the same time the bearer of a future-oriented design for the realization of republican rights and freedoms. The national independence of the collective, which is asserted externally, here appears as a protective casing for individual civic freedoms to be realized internally. This historically grounded symbiosis explains the Janus-face of the nation—which still today, as soon as national questions are at issue, brings competing interpretations and opposing political diagnoses into the arena.

I would not like to be misunderstood. If states with a long history to look back upon are split in two as a result of imperial rivalry between the powers, and if they are then annexed to different spheres of interest, the recovery of national unity is unquestionably a legitimate objective. But this objective is not neutral in relation to the *political form* in which the divided nation is to come together. A republican or democratic conception of the nation suggests a different answer from the one through which an ethnic conception may lead unification policy astray. For the idea of a *Volksnation* assumes that the demos of citizens, in order to stabilize itself, must be rooted in the *atmos* of fellow countrymen; the bonding power of a republican community of free and equal members is supposedly insufficient to assure the political stability of a state. I consider this assumption—that a democracy needs to be backed up by the bonding energy of a homogenous nation—to be both empirically false and politically dangerous. The political argument is straightforward enough. A government which based its action on the premise that its citizens' loyalty must be rooted in the consciousness of a common nature and destiny, shared by a more or less homogenous nation, would find itself having to *enforce* a certain uniformity against the actual complexity and the growing diversity of modern life. In the case of Europe, however, the premise in question also does not stand up to historical scrutiny.

If one looks closely at the history of the national state in nineteenth-century Europe, the symbiosis of nationalism and republicanism appears as a *temporary* constellation. National consciousness—which crystallized around the fiction of common descent, the construction of a shared history and the grammatical unification of a written language—had been propagated here at first by intellectuals and scholars. The idea of the nation also fitted in well with the administrative requirement of the modern state apparatus for uniform living conditions. Starting with the urban bourgeoisie, it gradually spread through modern mass communications to the rest of the population. Nationalism did, it is true, play a catalyzing role in the emergence of democracy. It made subjects for the first time into politically conscious citizens, who identified with the

constitution of their republic and with its enlightened goals. In the long run, however, the democratic process was perfectly capable of supporting itself. It does not have to rely upon the bonding power of nationalism for its continued existence, because the progressive inclusion of the population in the status of citizen produces the new level of abstract, legally mediated solidarity. As it is converted into a welfare state, the democratic process undertakes to guarantee the social integration of the population.

In more and more sophisticated pluralist societies, a diversity of cultural life-forms and world-views has anyway sprung up. Here politics could rid itself of the burden of social integration only at the price of repressing minorities. In such societies, only force could displace social integration from the public communication of civil society to the seemingly natural substratum of an ostensibly homogenous nation, and thus from the level of political debate to the level of a merely implicit, pre-political background consensus.

This conception of the relationship between national state and democracy allows us to identify certain deficits as we look back at the process of German unification. At a distance of some six years, we can see that the government which initiated and steered the process assumed too much in the way of a pre-political background consensus.

3. The Lessons of German 'Reunification'

At the time, something of the ethno-national world of the nineteenth-century imagination must still have been alive in the minds of our politicians. Anyway, the forces which took charge of directing the unification script in 1990 trusted too much in a common pre-political stock, hence in something like natural harmony among the members of a nation, and paid too little attention to the need for political clarification on the part of citizens of different backgrounds. The citizens of the two states, despite a common national history since 1871, had drifted so far apart since 1945 that—as we can see today—it would have been better if a conscious political will could have taken shape in both parts concerning the road to national unity and the political form in which they would join together. The government relieved the people of meaningful participation in the decision to go for rapid unification within the existing forms of the Federal Republic.

The constitutional provision for the event of reunification had been that a new constitution, supported by the whole nation, should take the place of the previous one, which would then count as having been merely provisional. This option would, of course, have necessitated a longer process of drawing closer together, and perhaps—as initially envisaged—a detour through a confederation of the two states. There were a number of internal and external political reasons, however, which spoke in favour of a faster track. For this option our constitution offered the hidden alternative of the 'accession' of individual states—like that of Saarland in its time—to the existing order. It was this route that the federal government took in bringing about unification. Early on, it set the course for rapid administrative and legal integration of the territory of the GDR into

the Federal Republic. In this way, a preliminary decision was also taken to move, without a transition, the state-socialist economy to the functional conditions of the market, as well as to assimilate all other areas of GDR life into the structures prevailing in the West.

The governing parties in Bonn advocated this road, and the population in the GDR quickly accepted it. Their approval was in effect expressed in the Volkskammer elections held on 18 March 1990 which, though formally still within the legal framework of the GDR, were already in the complete charge of the Western parties. Following the currency conversion in June, the newly reconstituted states of the GDR were annexed to the Federal Republic on 3 October 1990. A few weeks later, the federal government was voted back into office. These common federal elections gave the West German population its first opportunity to ratify retrospectively the fait accompli, and the relatively low turnout is therefore quite surprising. Subjectively, many people at that time were caught unawares by the fast and furious pace of events. But the reasons were different in the two parts of Germany: for people in the East, who had at least been able to react with their ballot paper to what the Western parties were offering; and for the citizens of the old Federal Republic, who had had to make do with the role of observing a clever and swift operation, stage-managed from the top down.

Now, it would be unfair to set the costs of this road to state unity against the hypothetical results of a normatively prescribed, but not actualized alternative. As this alternative exists only in the imagination, we know only the negative consequences of what happened in reality. Counterfactual considerations are especially tricky in the case of historical processes. So I have no wish to argue that, in the other event, the balance-sheet would, all in all, have been more positive. What I have in mind is something rather different. A way of proceeding which permitted broader discussion and opinion formation, as well as more extensive—and, above all, better prepared—participation of the public, would have included citizens in both East *and* West in the eventual *responsibility* for the process. The allocation of responsibilities for unwanted side-effects would have been steered from the beginning in a different direction. It would have been the people's *own* mistakes that they would have had to cope with.

Because there was no public discussion of what citizens of the two states should expect of each other, a certain discontent is now building up in the West, while feelings of resentment are spreading in the East. In this connection, I would just like to mention three points.

a) When the time came, the Kohl government dodged the issue of how to fairly balance and share the burdens between West and East. The transfer payments, now they come to 130-150 billion marks a year, are felt as somewhat depressing by parts of the Western population. This reaction is not all that hard to understand, given the rapidly worsening situation of the economy.

b) The controversial privatization strategy of the Treuhandanstalt, which was optimistically expected to realize 600 billion marks from the sale

of GDR state enterprises, has instead left behind a mountain of debt; it was not even able to halt the dangerous tendency to deindustrialization of once highly developed regions in the East. In the GDR, catastrophic mass unemployment has set in, especially affecting women and young people. This structural crash cuts deep into people's lives; but the hurt done to self-esteem obviously goes far beyond the circle of those who have directly lost out as a result of modernization.

c) The structures of the old Federal Republic have been transferred, under the direction of West German experts, to nearly every area of life and organization of the GDR: from the economy, judicial system and state administration, through the regulation of traffic and health, to higher education, the media, the armed forces, and so on. This experience of structural violence has exacerbated the differences in views and outlooks between East and West—one symptom of this being the success of the PDS, the successor of the former Communist state-party, which wins around a fifth of the vote in the new *Länder*. But the other parties, too, are trying to use the same atmosphere to their advantage.

You will have noticed that I am not looking so much at the problems raised in the process of unification itself. I have been speaking more of the mental processing of disappointments to which the fast-track strategy led. Other strategies would also have had disappointing side-effects. But this very fact highlights the particular drawback of the road that was actually taken. For it cuts off the population in the East from the possibility of making *their own* mistakes, and learning from them at an exceptionally difficult period of transition. The question is not just about who bears responsibility for the consequences of political decisions. It also concerns the means and scope for the articulation of people's own experiences and interests, in a public sphere not yet under the tutelage of Western 'know-alls'. The fact that citizens of the ex-GDR could not, as it were, engage in public discourse in their own home, proved to be a special disadvantage when attempts were made to straighten out the morally burdening legacy of their own regime—for example, over the disclosures concerning the all-pervasive state security service.

In general, we learn only from negative experiences. This is especially true of attempts to learn from history. No one can foresee the circumstances under which the two Korean states will one day, with luck, be united. Should there then be any choice between a fast and a slow track, it would be advisable to look back at the long shadows of the short-cut hastily pursued in Germany.

Translated by Patrick Camiller

Habermas on National Unification in Germany and Korea

Jürgen Habermas's public lecture in Seoul on 'National Unification and Popular Sovereignty' came as a welcome intervention for those Koreans committed to a reunification process which would be both peaceful and democratic. Although little of what he said, even on German unity, was entirely new to many of them, it was a rare privilege to enlist his international reputation and authority to drive home a number of most important points. For instance, his warnings against adopting 'a fast track' to unity following the German model should have a particularly salutary influence at a time when many, even in the ruling circles, are entertaining doubts about South Korea's ability to bring about or bear the consequences of a 'German-type' absorption but also when pressures to go for this option remain strong. Equally noteworthy, especially in the light of his known reservations about nationalism, was his acknowledgment that 'fortunately' in Korea the democratic forces were also the national forces promoting reunification—a timely reminder which at once bolsters the self-confidence of those forces and warns them that this link should never be taken for granted.

Outside Korea, the question of Korean reunification still awaits recognition as a matter of global concern. Here again Habermas's contribution, and the decision of the NLR to publish an English translation of his text, should help to insert that issue into international discourse—which still remains predominantly a Western, even largely an Anglophone, discourse. True, Habermas's own perception of its global significance is offered tentatively. All the more reason to gratefully take up the opportunity to make some comments from 'on the spot'—both to continue the open discussion that Habermas began in Seoul, something on which he always places greatest importance, and to explore the possibilities of practical solidarity, perhaps above and beyond what he envisages.

The 'German Model' in the Korean Context

The euphoria of the South Korean ruling circles at West Germany's absorption of its Eastern counterpart in 1989–90 did not last long. Sobering enough were the ensuing difficulties that severely burdened even the strongest of European economies. It was thus my judgement when I contributed an article to these pages that a new consensus toward 'absorption in yet another sense' was being formed, namely, 'a fuller integration of the two parts of the divided peninsula into the world market, the current state structure of North Korea helping to police its population for the benefit of South Korean and global capital as well as for its own self-preservation.'¹ Nearly four years later, the prospective costs of a 'German-type' absorption appear as daunting as ever, and they are more widely recognized. Yet other developments have complicated the picture, and the consensus against the German model has not been so firmly established as one might have expected. Among these, the death of the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung in July 1994 not only derailed the inter-Korean summit conference scheduled for that month but brought many uncertainties and instabilities first of all to the North Korean regime, but also to the powers-that-be of the entire peninsula, so that the mutual opening of the two Koreas has not been pursued to any meaningful degree. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the reaction of the government and the mainstream press in Seoul to Kim's death was almost as extravagant as Pyongyang's—a fact that reveals something about the nature of the 'division system' to which I shall return.

Then came the disastrous flood that hit large parts of North Korea in the summer of 1995, and another, though lesser, flood this year. True, the economic difficulties of North Korea (DPRK) owe much to both structural factors—those attendant upon an unusually isolated and ossified command economy—and conjunctural ones, such as the sudden loss of the Soviet bloc markets and sources of supply. Still there is no doubt that the floods have strained the country as never before. All this has given new credibility to the talk of the DPRK's imminent collapse and of the need for South Koreans to prepare themselves for an 'inevitable' take-over. Indeed, some of President Kim Young-sam's recent pronouncements seem to indicate that this view represents his current personal conviction—though it is true that consistency has never been his forte.

¹ Paik Nak-chung, 'South Korea: Unification and the Democratic Challenge', NLR 197, January–February 1993, p. 79

Aside from these temporary factors, however—temporary above all because the United States government, still the major actor on the scene, appears bent on stability for the Korean peninsula, but for other reasons that make a different course too risky for Seoul as well—it remains true that neither South Korean nor US ruling circles have any long-term strategy of unification other than absorption. This is not to say that merger is anticipated in the immediate future but that when it comes, it will be of the swift 'German type'. For, as Martin Hart-Landsberg persuasively argues, 'One of the most important lessons of the German unification experience is that it is not possible to achieve a gradual unification by absorption.'² The choice between a fast and a slow track, if it means merely a matter of sooner or later or even much later, is therefore not the main issue. Here Habermas's stipulation of a 'way of proceeding which permitted broader discussion and opinion formation, as well as more extensive—and, above all, better prepared—participation of the public' becomes crucial.³ But how shall we ensure such a way of proceeding in Korea when it was not possible in Germany? One may doubt that what Habermas calls '*Germany's experience of a rapid, if not over-hasty, process of unification*' will serve as a sufficiently powerful lesson, particularly since, for all his italicized emphasis, he does not apparently regard that experience as disastrous.⁴ Nor would 'disaster' be the right word, despite the dire consequences for many citizens on both sides, though mostly those of the new *Länder*.

The Unique Nature of Korea's Division

One must therefore look for different realities that would make a similar course in Korea more truly disastrous, and, at the same time, factors that may enable Koreans, for all their numerous disadvantages as against Germans, to succeed in an alternative undertaking. Habermas offers some valuable insights on both counts. His explication of 'the different starting points', for instance, suggests how even the questionable success of Germany is unlikely to be repeated in Korea, while his remark on the fortunate identity of national and democratic forces not obtainable in Germany provides an important clue.

For all his caution about equating the two situations, however, one gets the impression that Habermas's perception of Korean realities still remains heavily coloured by analogies with the German experience. For instance, his judicious observation that 'an *inevitable* implosion for endogenous reasons appears less likely than in the case of the GDR' leads to the inference that 'the prospect of a non-violent self-transformation or dissolution of the People's Republic will largely depend on how much citizens in the North—when the time comes—are attracted not only by the economic successes of the South, but also by its social relations and political freedoms.'⁵ Here he slides back precisely to the German

² Martin Hart-Landsberg, 'Korean Unification: Learning from the German Experience', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1995), p. 72

³ Habermas, 'National Unification and Popular Sovereignty', p. 12

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5. He even remarks earlier in the speech that 'national unification fell into the lap of the citizens of the old Federal Republic at a lucky moment of world history'. (p. 4)

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6, his emphasis, *ibid.*

model—at least to the East German experience prior to West Germany's take-over. And questions of analogy apart, the conclusion does not follow from the premise. For, I dare say, Southern conditions for all their imperfections are already attractive enough to Northerners—or at least will be if and when they are more generally known—but such an attraction does not necessarily imply as its consequence 'a non-violent self-transformation or dissolution' in the manner of the GDR. It could lead to either a violent upheaval as in Romania or, more likely in any foreseeable future, to a violent suppression of attempts at transformation or dissolution, if not a resumption of full-scale war, for the DPRK, unlike the GDR, has massive military forces at its command with not only traditions of fighting foreign enemies against enormous odds but bitter memories and vested interests which may dispose its cadres to risk another war rather than submit to a take-over by the South Korean Armed Forces.

In fact, this grim reality is the one crucial difference between the GDR and the DPRK that Habermas fails to address in his discussion of the 'different starting points'. It certainly would seem to render too forlorn his hope for a unification process 'which permitted broader discussion and opinion formation.' Yet precisely this potential for violent explosion places a certain constraint on any solution other than 'a detour through a confederation of the two states' for which Habermas, in spite of his entirely understandable reluctance to offer any concrete advice on questions of policy, entertains an obvious preference in the Korean as well as in the (counterfactual) German situation. But then it also calls for a mode of popular mobilization more radical than, though certainly not excluding, a 'progressive democratization' that 'makes living conditions more attractive for fellow-countrymen in the North, while in the South it initially strengthens cohesion so much that the liberal model of society is able to bear the mental and economic strains of a unification process.'⁶

What must be recognized above all else is the sui generis nature of Korea's division. Of course, every concrete situation may be termed unique in its way, but the unique nature of Korea's division is worth remembering since, over the course of its long duration, longer than anything comparable in Vietnam, Germany, Yemen or China, it has taken on, as I have argued, a certain systemic nature quite absent in the Vietnamese wars of national liberation but different in kind, too, from the erstwhile division of Germany, which was probably the crucial, yet little more than a local, manifestation of the Cold War system.⁷ One can hardly be severe with Habermas's failure to recognize this particularity, for one finds the same even in Immanuel Wallerstein, a very different thinker whose conception of an exceedingly variegated capitalist world-economy might well have prompted recognition of another unique vari-

⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

⁷ See Paik, 'South Korea', especially pp. 76–8. A similar though briefer discussion is available in German: Paik Nak-chung, 'Die Lehren aus der Vereinigung Deutschlands für Korea', in Bernhard Moltmann and Rainer Werning, eds, *Deutschland und Korea: Begegnung in der Teilung*, Schmitt 1993, pp. 42–3. More detailed treatments of the notion are available in Korean, for example in my book *Pandaen-chejo pyonhyuk-til kangha-til* [The 'Way of Study' for Transforming the Division System] Seoul 1994, and the subsequent debate in the journal *Changjuk-kwa-bipyong* [Creation and Criticism], nos. 84, 85 (Summer, Autumn 1994), 87 and 89 (Spring and Autumn 1995).

ant among its sub-systems in the division system or regime of the Korean peninsula, but who, in justly stressing the difference between the wars in Korea and Vietnam, fails to note the elements of Vietnam-like national liberation struggle in Korea. Thus he seems—though it is only fair to note that Korea is not the focus of his essay—to be content with the simplified view of the Korean War and the Berlin Blockade as ‘part and parcel of the Cold War world regime’,⁸ and fails both to explain the persistence of Korea’s division in the post-Cold War world or to attend to the different emancipatory potential that may lie in overcoming this particular division. In short, the ‘division system’ does invite certain analogies with both Germany and Vietnam—and admittedly more with the former than the latter despite assertions to the contrary by the North Korean leadership and one (much shrunken) sector of South Korea’s unification movement—but in the end presents a combination for which such analogies cannot account.

Overcoming the Division System

It is this particular combination that has produced the different ‘mentality of what are called “progressives”’ noted by Habermas: ‘In Korea, where there is the memory of Japanese imperialism, political and social criticism can also turn outward and combine with a strong national consciousness. In the Federal Republic, by contrast, there are good grounds for remembering the crimes of full-blooded nationalism in one’s own country. A German has good historical reasons to be cautious in handling national themes; it is no accident that the slogan of a “self-conscious nation” has been commandeered by the New Right since 1989.’⁹ My first comment, in view of the peculiar nature of Korea’s division, would be that what contributes to a relatively progressive national consciousness is not only ‘the memory of Japanese imperialism’ but also the experience of US imperialism *in both Koreas*. Second, because the division system has a structural bent toward state structures which are as vertically strong (that is, in relation to their respective citizens) as they are laterally weak (that is, unusually vulnerable to foreign manipulation and interventions), the shared though not identical suffering produced by this anti-democratic system, combined with a common anti-imperial experience, has the potential to produce a peninsula-wide solidarity movement in which national and democratic forces coincide. While these would be, again, not identical in strength nor in short-term goals, they might share the mid-range goal of overcoming the division system and the long-term goal of transforming the larger world system. The success of such a movement would be another matter, of course, depending on many unforeseeable developments but necessarily including significant international solidarity and sufficient enlightened self-interest on the part of the concerned powers-that-be to prefer ‘a detour through confederation’ to a more explosive course.

My third comment reaches beyond Korea and touches on a subject about which I can only speak under advisement, especially in a dialogue

⁸ Immanuel Wallerstein, ‘The Agonies of Liberalism. What Hope Progress?’, *NLR* 204, March–April 1994, p. 10.

⁹ Habermas, ‘National Unification’, p. 8

with Habermas—namely, the German political and intellectual scene. Granted that a 'German has good historical reasons to be cautious in handling national themes', this can hardly justify, only extenuate, the neglect by progressive intellectuals of the FRG to tackle the issue of national unity before it was suddenly thrust upon them. All the less so if consequently, on Habermas's own admission, 'the slogan of a "self-conscious nation" has been commandeered by the New Right since 1989.' Indeed, did not that neglect give Kohl and the West German vested interests represented by him a more or less free hand in pursuing the 'fast track'? To my mind, the fast track was more than a simply short-sighted or precipitous response to the collapse of 'the alternative model of society'¹⁰ represented by the Soviet empire, but a deliberate and, in its own way, perspicacious move 'to ensure, if not actually strengthen, the economic and political hegemony of existing West German institutions in a new united Germany.'¹¹ This in a situation where mass movements in the GDR had opened up the possibility of an all-German solidarity movement working for a different outcome but also when progressives on both sides were hampered precisely by the fundamental lack of an effective national discourse.

At any rate, in the Korean context, Habermas's exhortation that 'where there is a conflict between the two, the "demos" of citizens should take precedence over the "ethnos" of fellow countrymen'¹² fails to touch the crux of the matter. Of course, I have no problem with it as a general proposition, and even in the particular local context would welcome its salutary effects. For despite Habermas's generous remarks on the progressive potential of our 'national forces' signs of a more virulent form of nationalism are becoming increasingly noticeable on both sides of the Armistice Line as the division system prolongs itself. Indeed, somewhat surprisingly, the North Korean version of communism seems to display even stronger features of a quintessential 'ethno-nationalism', with its emphasis on common lineage—from the ancestral figure Tan'gun who is said to have founded the Korean nation in 2333 BC—the uniqueness and superiority of the Korean ethnos, and sometimes the implicit identification of 'the Great Leader' as the latter-day Tan'gun.

Progressive Ethnic Forces

Even so, championing a 'republican or democratic conception of the nation' as against 'an ethnic conception'¹³ does not go much beyond the vague principle already embodied in our slogan of 'peaceful and democratic reunification'. Not only does the ethnic conception still have a powerful role to play in a heteronomously divided nation of exceptionally high ethnic homogeneity, it can serve to raise theoretical and practical questions of possibly global significance beyond providing a warning against the pitfalls of 'ethno-nationalism'. For instance, in the international solidarity I have already referred to as a vital factor for

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹ Hart-Landsberg, 'Korean Unification', pp. 67–8. The idea, however, of a crucial lack of a national discourse is mine.

¹² Habermas, 'National Unification', p. 9.

¹³ Ibid., p. 10.

Korea's democratic reunification, the Korean diaspora—numbering some four million in the strategic countries of the US, China, Japan and Russia alone—plays and will need to play a substantial role. This diaspora already constitutes a multi-national ethnic community, and will continue to do so after reunification although its composition, distribution, self-image, and so forth will undergo certain changes. But are not such communities as much of a desideratum in a more peaceful and democratic world as multi-ethnic nation states and unions of states? True, ethno-nationalism, taken in its strict sense of 'one nation state for each ethnos' (whatever that may mean), amounts to nothing less than a formula for global chaos, but the question of cultural continuity often associated with it—sometimes quite arbitrarily manufactured for short-term propaganda purposes, but often real enough and the more precious as it is threatened by globalizing commercial culture—is quite another matter, one to which 'what are called "progressives"' perhaps pay too little heed in their thinking about a world of equality with genuine diversity. If this is the case, the democratic and ethnic conceptions of communal life—including the life in the nation-state where the menaces Habermas recalls are admittedly greater—should be understood as in perpetual danger of falling apart, as well as of the latter's overpowering the former, so that whether in Korea or Germany, in a regional framework or in larger global associations, the primary aim ought to be finding the right combination of the two, a combination which may have to go well beyond what one critic has called Habermas's 'congenitally under-powered' theory of political democracy.¹⁴

I have said that Habermas's preferred 'detour through confederation' is probably the one course to avert disaster either now or in the future. Precisely because the disaster may be deferred for some time through perpetuation of the division system—and it is a system in the sense of possessing both within and outside the peninsula powerful vested interests committed to its self-reproduction—the achievement of the detour is far from a certainty. But what should lie at the end of it? So far the predominant discourse of not only the Seoul and Pyongyang authorities but of many reunification-movement people in the South as well is focused upon a nation state of the classic model—the kind that Koreans should have attained in 1945 but for foreign (mostly US) intervention. My own view, however—and one increasingly shared by colleagues and compatriots—is that this makes little sense either in view of the different histories that the North and South have lived for over half a century, and for which our people, for better or worse, have paid with blood and sweat, or in the light of the different conjuncture of world history we find ourselves in, where the invention of new compound state structures has become the order of the day.

What Koreans should envisage—and without some such vision even the 'detour' will surely fail—is a new federative structure suited to our particular historical experience. This naturally includes the experience of a population with at least ten centuries of political unity and, even now, an exceptionally high degree of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, yet already with some proto-national divergences due to the length and

¹⁴ Perry Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement*, Verso, London 1992, p. 331

severity of the division. But the new federal design will also reflect the experience of the confederal 'detour' itself which, while dealing a probably irrecoverable blow to proponents of perpetual division, will have provided legal grounds for a controlled population movement across the present border and a gradual, mutually negotiated arms reduction not commonly allowed for in the 'republican or democratic conception of the nation'. The emergence of such an innovative state structure, with its collateral of a new kind of multi-national ethnic community spread across the globe, will seriously challenge, though not by itself bring to an end, the current world system of specious diversity and ever-increasing inequality. In my view, such a challenge would certainly be a more radical one than the US defeat in Vietnam in the past, and no less of a challenge than a turn of the European Union toward a genuinely parliamentary-republican course in some possible future.

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The Ecstasy of Philistinism

Believing that philistinism was not mere vulgarity but 'the antithesis par excellence of aesthetic behaviour', Adorno expressed interest in studying the phenomenon as a *via negativa* to the aesthetic.¹ But the project remained unrealized, and although he frequently made dismissive or insulting remarks about philistines, Adorno never bothered to investigate what, if anything, philistinism might be. In this respect, his attitude was characteristic of the discourse against philistinism that had been in circulation since the nineteenth century. But in his unfulfilled desire to study the philistine, Adorno opened the way to a revaluation of that tradition, for upon closer examination the philistine proves to be a figure of greater historical and intellectual importance than Adorno imagined.

On the face of it, the type of study Adorno had in mind should be relatively straightforward. A glance at the newspapers suggests that we are surrounded by philistines. To cite just a few examples from recent British publications:

when David Hockney returned from Los Angeles for the opening of his exhibition at the Royal Academy in November 1995, he complained that British MPs are 'Philistines who are not concerned with beauty'. The police's involvement in the case of a news-reader whose partner had taken photographs of a naked child was, he suggested, a consequence of the 'philistine law on pictures' that the government had instituted.² But it is not only Conservatives who are branded as philistines. A few days later, the editor of *Tribune* was quoted as saying: 'There's a new philistinism in Labour. It's not interested in debate. If you talk to people close to the Labour leadership, they say all the Party wants is ideas they can sell to the *Sun*, *Mirror* and *Mail*.'³ Yet philistinism is clearly perceived to extend beyond the realm of politics: in the following month, ten pages of the *Literary Review* were devoted to a 'Cry Against the Philistines', a litany of protests against what Tariq Ali, one of the contributors, called the 'commercial philistinism which has swamped this country's culture.'⁴ According to George Walden, another contributor, 'Philistines... are no longer barbarians encamped outside the Citadel of the Arts: now they sit atop it, benevolent-eyed, directing the cultural traffic.'⁵

Perhaps such protests should lead us to conclude that philistinism is something endemic to ruling classes. This was certainly the view of one contributor to the letters pages of *Opera* magazine in 1992: Julian Budden (of Florence), concerned about the lack of funding for opera houses, concluded that: 'If there is such a thing as "the English disease", it is, I submit, Philistinism in high places.'⁶ But other readers of *Opera* were quick to point out that he had underestimated the extent of the problem. Ronald Crichton (of Eastbourne) responded that philistinism is an 'affliction [that] is widespread, insidious and in outward appearance not always immediately recognizable'; philistinism is not confined to high places but is, he argued, an 'infection [that] goes right down to the roots of English life.'⁷ Nevertheless, those with a less parochial perspective affirm that philistinism is not merely an English disease: England may be rooted in philistinism, but by all accounts its full flowering has taken place elsewhere, in what Terry Eagleton recently termed that 'extravagantly philistine country', the United States.⁸

Like Adorno, who believed that the philistine's 'anti-artistic attitude verges on sickness',⁹ contemporary critics of philistinism treat the phenomenon as pathological. But what exactly is this disease whose symptomatology includes so many superficially unrelated problems? To answer this question it is helpful to employ a set of distinctions developed by Michael Thompson in *Rubbish Theory*. According to his analysis there are three types of object—those like antiques and works of art which are considered durable and whose value is expected to increase; those that are

¹ T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, London 1984, p. 342, p. 454.

² *The Independent*, 8 November 1995, p. 1.

³ *The Independent on Sunday*, 12 November 1995, p. 8.

⁴ T. Ali, 'The BBC Goes Tabloid', *Literary Review*, December 1995, p. 17.

⁵ G. Walden, 'Patronage is All', *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶ *Opera*, no. 43, 1992, p. 893.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1152.

⁸ T. Eagleton, *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 November 1995, p. 6.

⁹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 454.

considered transient (that is, everyday objects whose values are highest when new and subsequently decrease) and those that have no value and are treated accordingly.¹⁰ Thompson's analysis allows us to define the philistine position more precisely. The philistine should argue not that existing objects are of temporary as opposed to durable aesthetic value, or that, although they may once have been or may yet become valuable, all existing objects are valueless, but that all objects are permanently aesthetically valueless. In consequence, any object whose value is derived solely from its classification as an art-object is fit only for recycling.

With this in mind, it is easy to see that certain positions that are sometimes described as philistine are not really philistine at all. For example, people who value popular culture in the same way as high culture, or who prefer popular culture to high culture, are just promoting the transient at the expense of the durable or revaluing the transient as durable. The position of anti-art movements like Dada is less clear. Dada certainly gave expression to the philistine impulse, but although its rhetoric was vigorously anti-aesthetic, what actually happened in the creation of a ready-made was that something that had the transient aesthetic value of a machine-produced object or was even an object of no value at all was then treated as though it were a durable of lasting aesthetic value. It is therefore misleading to suggest that the ready-made says, 'art is junk';¹¹ what it says is only that 'junk is art'.

To demonstrate that art is junk, Dada would have had to work in the opposite direction. Duchamp certainly contemplated this: 'At another time, wanting to expose the basic antinomy between art and "ready-mades", I imagined a reciprocal ready-made: use a Rembrandt as an ironing board'.¹² However, neither he, nor the other Dadaists did so, and the museums of the world were never turned into laundry rooms. In consequence, although art galleries are now filled with objects that might have been taken from rubbish tips, rubbish tips remain barren of objects taken from art galleries. Treating junk as art differs from treating art as junk in just the same way that pantheism differs from atheism, or the current multiculturalist respect for all moralities differs from the nihilist disregard for any morality. One is an inclusive extrapolation of value, the other its direct negation.

If philistinism is the absolute negation of the aesthetic, and is differentiated from the promiscuous pan-aestheticism of Dada, and the temporalized aesthetics of popular culture, it becomes easier to see precisely what type of territory the philistines should occupy. Philistines are not just opposed to art for art's sake but have no time for the arts whatsoever. They never distinguish between a good tune and an awful one; they pass through areas of outstanding natural beauty without noticing; they are indifferent to their furniture; they never spot a masterpiece in a junk shop, or complain about the 'rubbish' in modern art galleries. For them, it is all rubbish. Indeed, the idea that other people might discern aesthetic differences between objects and evaluate them accordingly would

¹⁰ M. Thompson, *Rubbish Theory*, Oxford 1972, pp. 103–30.

¹¹ H. Richter, *Dada. Art and Anti-Art*, London 1965, p. 90.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

seem intrinsically absurd. They might therefore also flout the expectation that they should behave differently in the presence of these aesthetically valued objects. They would drop litter in beauty spots, lean nonchalantly against the paintings in the National Gallery, demolish their listed homes, talk loudly to their neighbours during concerts.

There are, of course, many people who occasionally exhibit philistine behaviour, but they are rarely ideologically motivated, and when one investigates the ideological position the philistines supposedly occupy it proves surprisingly empty. Philistinism, for all its supposed ubiquity, is frustratingly elusive. Dictionaries of theology contain entries on atheism, and dictionaries of politics provide information about anarchism, but dictionaries of aesthetics contain no information about philistinism.¹³ There are no books on its principles,¹⁴ no courses available at universities, and no Societies for the Promotion of Philistinism working with the public; there are not even any branches of Philistines Anonymous for those in recovery from the disease. If confronted, supposed philistines invariably argue that they are not actually philistines at all, just people opposed to the waste of public money, or to the abuse of children, or some other social evil. They are, they say, not opposed to art *per se*, but simply to art that is offensive, or wasteful, or unrepresentative of the general population. Even Gary Bushell, the television critic of the *Sun*, whose call to *Sun* readers to boycott the National Lottery because of its support for the arts prompted the *Literary Review*'s 'Cry Against the Philistines', is careful to specify that it is money 'handed over to the *unpopular arts*' that is a 'slap in the face for Joe Public'.¹⁵

Is Philistinism Possible?

Any attempt to study philistinism must first take account of the curious fact that a constant stream of abuse is directed against philistinism without there being any self-identified philistines to whom these denunciations refer. How is this to be explained? The apparent absence of philistines from the cultural landscape might lead one to suppose that philistinism is not just a rare phenomenon but an imaginary one, and some would argue that if philistines are people who look upon all cultural products as valueless, they cannot exist. The argument for the imperative of value (used by Steven Connor), or the principle of generalized positivity (formulated by Barbara Herrnstein Smith), goes like this: to deny the value of everything is, if that denial is to carry any conviction, necessarily to value the denial itself. Therefore, as Smith argues in her critique of Bataille's notion of absolute expenditure, 'no valorization of anything, even of "loss" itself, can escape the idea of some sort of positivity—that is gain, benefit or advantage—in relation to some economy.'¹⁶ In which case, the total renunciation of value is impossible, for all

¹³ See, for example, D. Cooper, ed., *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Oxford 1992.

¹⁴ But see R. Taylor, *Art, an Enemy of the People*, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 1978; J. Gimpel, *Against Art and Artists*, Edinburgh 1991; A. Gell, 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology', in J. Coote and A. Shelton, eds, *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, Oxford 1992, pp. 40–63; M. Bull, 'Philistinism and Fetishism', *Art History*, vol. 17, 1994, pp. 127–31; S. Home, *Art Strike Handbook*, London 1989.

¹⁵ Quoted by A. Waugh, *Literary Review*, December 1993, p. 1 (emphasis added).

¹⁶ B. Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*, Cambridge, Mass. 1988, p. 137.

that is happening is that one set of values is being exchanged for another. Applied to philistinism, this argument suggests that insofar as 'challenges to the structures of artistic value and value in general will themselves constitute forms of value, they will be promptly restored to the fields of exchange and transaction which they had attempted to transcend.'¹⁷

Smith and Connor conceive of the discourse of value on the model of Derridean *différance*, as an economy of 'recurrent tautologies, circularities and infinite regresses' in which the negative is always eventually transmuted into the positive, and the most that negation can effect is 'the widening of the circuit which rounds negativity home to the positive eventualities of value'.¹⁸ But although there are certainly instances in which what appears to be philistinism is not a renunciation of the aesthetic but an aesthetic of renunciation, there are also other possibilities. The aesthetic is only one amongst many forms of value, and philistinism only one of the ways of renunciation. It is quite conceivable that the denial of the aesthetic may be motivated not so much by an aesthetic of negation, as by some non-aesthetic value. The renunciation of the aesthetic may be a moral, religious, or political imperative, just as the negation of these other spheres may have an aesthetic motivation: one could be, on aesthetic grounds alone, a nihilist, an atheist, or an anarchist. Such transfers from one type of value to another may not transcend evaluation altogether, but nor are they necessarily part of an inescapable circle from which no values are ever lost. So, even if one accepts the logic of the argument, the principle of general positivity, as it is misleadingly termed, demonstrates not the ubiquity of value but only its ineradicability. As such, it amounts to no more than a 'principle of general wetness' which states that in order to be described as such even the driest environment must have spots that are relatively moist. The existence of traces of value in the wastes of the negative does not imply that positivity is either predominant or constant. Not only may the level of the positive fluctuate, but certain types of value may evaporate entirely, only to be replaced by others. Indeed, the difficulty of upholding more than one type of value simultaneously suggests that the positive is never likely to be more than a tiny oasis in the vast expanses of the negative.

Thus, although value may be ineradicable, it may also be fragile, and its existence in any one area a contingent historical fact dependent on local conditions. The imperative of value therefore signals not the omnipresence of value, but the capacity of value to adapt and re-emerge at the very moment when it seemed to have disappeared. With this in mind, it is worth asking whether the fact that philistinism is a form of negation that is universally condemned but nowhere visible may be less a sign of its inescapable spectrality, than a historically significant indication of the nature and location of positive value in contemporary society.

A Short History of Negation

Once upon a time, before nihilists and anarchists had been invented and

¹⁷ S. Connor, *Theory and Cultural Value*, Oxford 1992, p. 59.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98

when philistines were just a tribe mentioned in the Old Testament, the only type of negation that anyone could imagine was the denial of the existence of God. Even so, 'atheism', although known to the ancient Greeks, is a word that enters modern European languages only in the sixteenth century.¹⁹ Before that nobody seemed able to conceive of the possibility that such a direct negation of socially sanctioned values was possible. All deviants were classified as heretics—people whose negation of Christianity was itself a diabolical form of Christianity rather than people who negated the value of Christianity altogether. And even when atheism was isolated from heresy as a distinct category, it was not a word used by unbelievers to identify themselves, but by theologians to attack supposed unbelievers.

The position of atheism in early modern Europe has been extensively studied in recent years, and it is worth describing in some detail for it offers striking analogies to the position of philistinism today. Atheists were perceived to be so numerous as to plague entire countries. According to one recent historian, "To judge by... the learned literature of the age, "the atheist" was almost everywhere in early modern France';²⁰ but not only France: Guy Parin complained that 'Italy is a country of pox, poisoning and atheism';²¹ Thomas Fuller echoed many other writers in believing that 'Atheisme in England is more to be feared than Popery'.²² As Francis Bacon recognized, such indiscriminate use of the term made atheists seem more numerous than they were, but even he had no doubt that atheism was real threat: "They that deny a God destroy man's nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature."²³

Like philistinism, atheism was universally decried as a form of intellectual self-mutilation: according to Laurent Pollot, atheists must have 'gouged out their own eyes expressly in order not to see God in his works nor in his word'.²⁴ Indeed, it was viewed as so perverse that many commentators insisted that it was logically inconceivable for anyone to hold the atheist position. So at the same time as atheism was everywhere denounced, its existence was held to be impossible. As Hume later remarked: "There is not a greater number of philosophical reasonings displayed upon any subject, than those, which prove the existence of a Deity, and refute the fallacies of *Atheists*; and yet most religious philosophers still dispute whether any man can be so blinded as to be a speculative atheist."²⁵

Even if atheism was not—as Lucien Febvre claimed—conceptually impossible until the seventeenth century, there can be little doubt that at the time atheists were first denounced from the pulpits and burnt at the

¹⁹ M. Hunter and D. Wootton, 'New Histories of Atheism', in M. Hunter and D. Wootton, eds, *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, Oxford 1992, p. 25.

²⁰ A. C. Kors, *Atheism in France, 1650–1729*, Princeton 1990, vol. I, p. 17.

²¹ Quoted in N. Davidson, 'Unbelief and Atheism in Italy, 1500–1700', in Hunter and Wootton, *Atheism*, p. 56.

²² M. Hunter, 'The Problem of "Atheism" in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, no. 35, 1985 p. 138.

²³ F. Bacon, *Essays*, London 1975, p. 50.

²⁴ Quoted in Kors, *Atheism in France*, p. 28.

²⁵ D. Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford 1975, p. 149.

stake, there were hardly any atheists at all. The unfortunate people condemned as atheists were often those whose enthusiasm for denouncing this hypothetical crime was just insufficiently enthusiastic.²⁶ In the sixteenth century, therefore, atheism, like philistinism today, was everywhere condemned but nowhere to be found. Yet by denouncing atheism, theologians mapped out an intellectual position for their phantom adversaries that was eventually filled by people who actually espoused the arguments the theologians had given them.²⁷ Even so, it was a century after the word was originated that the first indisputable modern atheists appeared, and well into the eighteenth century before atheism became commonplace.

But at the same time that atheism became a reality, people began to find values not in religion but in human society itself, and a new form of negation became imaginatively possible—anarchism. Like atheism it emerges as the imaginary antithesis of the prevailing mode of value, except that in this case it is the antithesis of the state. Although first used as a term of abuse to describe religiously motivated libertarians in mid-seventeenth-century England, the meaning of 'anarchist' was not immediately differentiated from 'atheist', for atheism was, as Bacon put it, living 'without having respect to the government of the world'.²⁸ As late as 1678, Cudworth could dismiss the possibility that the Egyptians had been 'Atheists and Anarchists, such as supposed no living understanding Deity' in favour of the idea that they might have been 'Polyarchists such as asserted a multitude of understanding deities'.²⁹ Nevertheless, the concepts of anarchism and atheism had already been prised apart. Irrespective of whether Hobbes was, as his critics invariably claimed, himself an atheist, he unquestionably gave priority to political rather than religious values, and in *Leviathan* (1651) subjected all religions, including Christianity, to the authority of the civil sovereign.³⁰ The negation against which he developed his argument in *Leviathan* was therefore anarchistic not atheistic, and in his account of 'the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe' he offers a description of anarchism—first defined in Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* (1656) as 'the Doctrine, Positions or art of those that teach *Anarchy*; also the being itself of the people without a Prince or Ruler'—which ascribes to it the same dehumanizing consequences that Bacon had attributed to atheism: the absence of morality, and a life that is brutish and short.³¹

By simultaneously providing 'the main theoretical basis for Restoration atheism',³² and, in his account of 'the state of Warre', a new negation against which the values necessary for a full human life might be defined,

²⁶ For example, Geoffroy Vallée was burnt as an atheist in 1579 despite having argued in his offending pamphlet that 'man can never be an atheist and is created thus by God' Kors, *Atheism in France*, p. 27

²⁷ This is Kors's position, for an alternative approach, see T. Gregory, *Thomasius Rudavius: Eruditione e ateismo nel Seicento*, Naples 1979

²⁸ Bacon, *Essays*, p. 50

²⁹ R. Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, London 1845, vol. 1, p. 540

³⁰ See R. Tuck, 'The "Christian Atheism" of Thomas Hobbes', in Hunter and Wootton, *Atheism*, pp. 111–30

³¹ T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Cambridge 1991, pp. 88–90

³² D. Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain*, London 1988, p. 61.

Hobbes effected a momentous transposition of values. One negation was tacitly accepted, and its negative implications transferred to another as a new value assumed priority. But just as the invention of atheism had taken place without anyone actually advocating the position, so the invention and repudiation of anarchism occurred without the intervention of any anarchists. No one espoused an explicitly anarchist political theory until William Godwin, and no one used 'anarchy' in a positive sense until Proudhon.³³ However, that did not prevent anarchists being roundly abused, and the French Revolution in particular provided numerous occasions for the denunciation of anarchism as the epitome of negativity and criminality: in 1791 Bentham wrote: 'Whatever is, is not—is the maxim of the anarchist, as often as anything comes across him in the shape of a law he happens not to like';³⁴ four years later, the Directory put it more graphically: anarchists were 'men covered with crimes, stained with blood, and fattened by rapine, enemies of laws they do not make and of all governments in which they do not govern'.³⁵ Nevertheless, events in France also inspired the development of a political theory which embodied the anarchistic principles its critics denounced. And when they finally emerged to occupy the position so long ascribed to them, anarchists defined their philosophy by separating the political from the ethical. Thus, Godwin anticipated with delight 'the dissolution of political government... that brute engine which has been the only perennial cause of the vices of mankind',³⁶ but only because government so often proved to be 'the treacherous foe of the domestic virtues'.³⁷ Morality, did not depend upon some form of social contract, but was 'an irresistible deduction from the wants of one man, and the ability of another to relieve them'.³⁸

Although early anarchist thinkers like Godwin and Proudhon attacked the state on ethical grounds, it seemed to many observers that the anarchist spirit of negation would encompass all forms of morality. The nihilist was born. First used in this sense in a French dictionary of neologisms in 1801, a nihilist was defined as 'One who does not believe in anything'.³⁹ Needless to say, at this stage there was no one claiming to be a nihilist, just a chorus of outraged moralists arguing that nihilism disregards 'the highest motives and also the duties imposed by right and honour' and so signalled the start of a Hobbesian 'battle of all against all'.⁴⁰ However, self-proclaimed nihilists did eventually emerge in Russia. Although similar to anarchists, they saw themselves as reacting not so much 'against political despotism, but against the moral despotism that weighs upon the private and inner life of the individual'.⁴¹ Nevertheless, in the numerous anti-nihilist novels of the 1860s, and even in Turgenev's more equivocal *Fathers and Sons*, nihilists were presented as indiscriminately hostile to everything.

³³ See P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, London 1992.

³⁴ J. Bentham, *Works*, London 1843, vol. II, p. 498.

³⁵ Quoted in Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, p. 432.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

³⁷ W. Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, Oxford 1971, p. 18.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³⁹ See M.A. Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, Chicago 1995, pp. 275–6, n. 5.

⁴⁰ J. Radowitz, quoted in J. Goudablom, *Nihilism and Culture*, Oxford, 1980, p. 5.

⁴¹ S. Kravchinsky, quoted in Gillespie, *Nihilism*, p. 140.

This was not a portrayal that nihilists welcomed. Even those who accepted the label objected to the idea that they negated all values, arguing that 'when a person negates utterly everything he negates precisely nothing'.⁴² And one charge they were particularly keen to deny was the idea that they were indifferent to the arts. Turgenev's nihilist Bazarov had dismissed Raphael, and in Krestovsky's anti-nihilist novel *Panurge's Head*, the nihilists argue that 'A normally developed and free people has no art and should have none. And if you produce art you should either be put in a mental hospital or a reformatory'.⁴³ But actual nihilists like Chernyshevsky refused to accept that they were philistines who 'reject everything... paintings, statues, violin and bow, opera, theatre, feminine beauty'.⁴⁴

In Nietzsche, who derived his conception of nihilism from these Russian sources, the differentiation of nihilism from philistinism was taken much further. At the same time as he welcomed the devaluation of all moral values, Nietzsche invested the aesthetic with heightened significance. He accepted 'the absolute untenability of existence when it comes to the highest values one recognizes', but argued that 'it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified'.⁴⁵ As he later wrote in *Ecce Homo*, aesthetic values were 'the only values the *Birth of Tragedy* recognizes'.⁴⁶ Yet again, the disappearance of value from one sphere was accompanied by its reappearance in another.

Nihilism was not, therefore, necessarily the end of all negativity. As the reactionary Spanish Catholic, Donoso Cortés remarked in 1851, 'The rejection of all authority is far from being the last of all possible negations; it is simply a preliminary negation which future nihilists will consign to their prolegomena'.⁴⁷ With the transfer of value from the moral to the aesthetic, a new form of negation did become possible—philistinism, the negation of the aesthetic, and it was at precisely the same period that nihilists emerged in Russia that the assault on philistinism began. The German word *philister* had been used in the eighteenth century to designate towns-people as opposed to students, but was subsequently applied to all those who were indifferent to the arts, first being used in this sense by Goethe.⁴⁸ In the 1830s, attacks on German philistines became commonplace—Schumann even formed the *Dauidsbund* whose members were enjoined to 'kill the philistines, musical and otherwise'⁴⁹—and in 1869 the most famous polemic against philistinism appeared, Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*.

This brief survey of the history of negation suggests that the contemporary position of philistinism as a negation that is everywhere condemned

⁴² D. Pisarev, quoted in C. Moser, *Anti-Nihilism in the Russian Novel of the 1860s*, The Hague 1964, p. 24.

⁴³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 163.

⁴⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴⁵ F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, New York 1967, p. 52.

⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, Harmondsworth 1979, p. 79.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Goudsblom, *Nihilism and Culture*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ J. and W. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Leipzig 1889, vol. VII, pp. 1826–7.

⁴⁹ G. Eismann, *Robert Schumann*, Leipzig 1956, vol. I, p. 87. See also D. Arendt, 'Das Philistertum des 19. Jahrhunderts,' *Der Monat*, no. 21, May 1969, pp. 33–49.

and nowhere advocated is both more interesting and less paradoxical than it first appears. Philistinism, it transpires, is simply the most recent in a series of negations. Atheism was identified and condemned from the sixteenth century onwards, but atheists appeared only in the seventeenth. Anarchists were abused from the seventeenth century and eventually materialized at the end of the eighteenth. But at the same time as anarchists emerged, a new bogeyman was born, the nihilist; and a generation later nihilists proclaimed their own existence. It is at exactly this moment that the philistine comes into being as the most recent but surely not the last negation.

The pattern that emerges from this series of negations is not circular but dialectical. Although each negation has eventually moved from spectrality to reality, it has not been incarnated in the form of its contrary. (Atheists did not set up a religion, anarchists did not form a government, and nihilists did not establish a morality.) Instead, the negation of one value allowed the differentiation and affirmation of another value that had been subsumed within it. At each new stage, ideological positions that had once appeared self-contradictory suddenly became available. The critics of atheism had assumed that there could be no political authority without God; the critics of anarchy argued that there could be no morality without the state; the critics of nihilism suggested that there could be no beauty without morality; and yet with each shift improbable new types appeared: the authoritarian atheist, the ethical anarchist, the aesthetic nihilist.

This dialectical differentiation of value cannot be construed as an expansion in an economy of value in which every negativity is equally a positivity that can be exchanged without loss for any other positivity, including that which was originally negated. On the contrary, the dialectic embodies a succession of negations and differentiations in which that which is differentiated and affirmed is always a fraction of that which was negated. Whereas theology carried within it implicit political, moral, and aesthetic values, no moral, political, or theological values have successfully been derived from pure aesthetics. This dialectic is not another way of talking about the circulation of value, for what it describes is a narrowing spiral of value.

Set within this historical context, the invisibility of the philistines seems predictable. Throughout the sequence of negations, the absent negative is defined as a sub-human inversion of the primary value in the prevailing system, and one reason that negative positions are so slow to be filled is that occupying them is dangerous, usually illegal, and always profoundly socially unacceptable. Today, of course, atheism, anarchism, and even nihilism are recognizable intellectual positions, and these terms have fallen out of favour as terms of abuse. But the very fact that people continue to call one another philistines, while refusing to accept the label themselves, is a clear sign that the aesthetic is assumed to be a shared social value and that being considered a philistine remains a real embarrassment. However, the historical pattern also suggests that the philistine position, having first been defined by its opponents, will eventually be occupied by its adherents. To find out what the philistine may be like, we must turn to its critics.

The Birth of Philistinism

Culture and Anarchy remains the classic statement of the opposition between culture and philistinism. But while Arnold declined to give a label to the adherents of culture, referring to them only as persons led 'by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection',⁵⁰ he differentiated between three groups in which the benefits of culture were imperfectly realized, absent, or rejected: the barbarians, the populace, and the philistines. The barbarians were those aristocrats who, instead of imbibing what Arnold termed the 'sweetness and light' of culture, had 'a kind of image or shadow of sweetness' formed from a superficial acquaintance with culture which left them with only 'the exterior graces and accomplishments, and the more external of the inward virtues'.⁵¹ The populace were what Arnold termed 'that vast portion... of the working class which, raw and half-developed, has long lain half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor',⁵² while the philistines were those who were 'particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light'.⁵³ They alone have no excuse. The populace are insensible to sweetness and light because they are deprived of it; the barbarians are seduced by 'exterior goods', but they are still goods, and to be seduced by them is natural. The philistines, however, cherish 'some dismal and illiberal existence in preference to light' and are, in Arnold's view, simply perverse.

Arnold identified the philistines with the new middle class of industrialists. 'The people who believe most that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being very rich, and who most give their lives and thoughts to becoming rich are just the very people whom we call Philistines'.⁵⁴ He therefore imagined the philistines to be resisting the sweetness of art as a result of their 'bondage to machinery'.⁵⁵ The perverse resistance to the aesthetic is explained as an imprisonment in the technology of capitalism; the philistine may desire beauty, but has made himself unable to respond to it.

The philistine position of resistance to the aesthetic is accurately conceived by Arnold, but it is imagined only as a kind of strait-jacket in which those whose involvement with the aesthetic might damage their other interests are confined. If, however, we consider Arnold's account of the philistine alongside another text defining the role of culture in the mid-nineteenth century, another possible conception of philistinism emerges. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche mistakenly congratulates himself on having established the word 'culture-philistine' (*Bildungsphilister*) in the German language.⁵⁶ He had used it frequently in the first of his *Untimely Meditations*, an attack on the theologian David Strauss. The philistine, Nietzsche wrote, is 'the antithesis of a son of the muses, of the artist, of the man of genuine culture',⁵⁷ while the culture-philistine is a philistine

⁵⁰ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, New Haven 1994, p. 73

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 71

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 68

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵⁶ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p. 85

⁵⁷ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, Cambridge 1983, p. 7

who denies that he is a philistine—a sort of nineteenth-century counterpart to all the believing atheists of the sixteenth century. According to Nietzsche: 'An unhappy contortion must have taken place in the brain of the cultural philistine, he regards as culture precisely that which negates culture, and since he is accustomed to proceed with consistency he finally acquires a consistent collection of such negations, a system of unculture . . . he denies, secretes, stops his ears, averts his eyes, he is a negative being even in his hatred and hostility. The philistine, Nietzsche continues, is 'a hindrance to the strong and creative, a labyrinth for all who doubt and go astray, a swamp to the feet of the weary, a fetter to all who would pursue lofty goals, a poisonous mist to new buds'.⁵⁸

In this intemperate attack on philistinism, Nietzsche rehearses many elements of his critique of Socrates in the *Birth of Tragedy*, published the previous year. The philistine has 'a certain easy complacency, a self-contentment in one's own limitations' that echoes 'Socratism's complacent delight in existence'.⁵⁹ Socrates is also the prototype for Strauss's 'shameless philistine optimism',⁶⁰ and just as Socrates has 'art-destroying tendencies', so the philistine 'lodges in the works of our great poets and composers like a worm which lives by destroying'.⁶¹ In the *Birth of Tragedy*, the test of whether someone is a 'true aesthetic listener or belongs to the community of the Socratic-critical persons' is the feeling 'with which he accepts miracles represented on the stage'; in the essay on Strauss, the philistine 'hates the genius: for the genius has the justified reputation of performing miracles'.⁶²

Read in the light of Nietzsche's subsequent attack on Strauss, *The Birth of Tragedy* emerges as an account not just of the birth of tragedy from the spirit of music, but also of the birth of philistinism from the spirit of rationality. It is, in other words, the unrecognized counterpart of *Culture and Anarchy*, published just three years earlier. For although they could hardly be more different in tone, the central concern of the two books is the same: both are attempts to define the relationship between culture and its alternatives, written by post-Christian Hellenists at the precise moment when the aesthetic began to succeed the ethical as the primary form of public value.

In both *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Culture and Anarchy*, the dichotomy between ordinary and higher experience is accompanied by the suggestion that the higher justifies and gives meaning to the ordinary. Without the elevated, harmonious, and perfected view of the world available through art and culture, the everyday reality experienced by the ordinary self is 'multitudinous, turbulent, and blind' according to Arnold; a nauseating world of pain and contradiction, according to Nietzsche. For Arnold, the only perfect freedom is 'an elevation of our best self, and a harmonizing in subordination to this, and to a perfected humanity, all the . . . impulses of our ordinary selves'.⁶³ For Nietzsche, 'it is only as an

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 8

⁵⁹ *Unsystematic Meditations*, p. 10, *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 120

⁶⁰ *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 97; *Unsystematic Meditations*, 27

⁶¹ *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 107; *Unsystematic Meditations*, p. 25

⁶² *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 135; *Unsystematic Meditations* p. 33.

⁶³ Arnold, *Culture*, p. 121

aesthetic phenomenon that the existence and the world are eternally justified' and it is 'the perfection of these states in contrast to the incompletely intelligible everyday world...which make life possible and worth living.'⁶⁴

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, the contrast between ordinary and higher experience is articulated through two oppositions: that between Apollo and Silenus, and that between Dionysus and Socrates. According to Nietzsche, the former dichotomy was expressed in Raphael's *Transfiguration*. In the upper half of the picture 'the Apollonian world of beauty', 'a radiant floating in purest bliss, a serene contemplation from wide open eyes'; in the lower the terrible world of Silenus 'the reflection of suffering primal and eternal'.⁶⁵ To illustrate what the world would be like without the redeeming power of the Apollonian, Nietzsche recounted a story told by Sophocles in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Silenus was hunted by Midas and asked 'what is the best and most desirable of all things for man'. He replies: 'What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to be, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is—to die soon'. This terrible wisdom was, Nietzsche argued, 'overcome by the Greeks with the aid of the Olympian *middle world* of art'.⁶⁶ Art 'alone knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live'.⁶⁷

Like the Apollonian, the Dionysian is a redemptive art, but one that offers redemption through participation rather than contemplation. According to Nietzsche, 'we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art' and when in Dionysian 'song and in dance man expresses himself as a member of a higher community...he has become a work and art'.⁶⁸ But in Socrates, in whose Cyclops eye 'the fair frenzy of artistic enthusiasm had never glowed',⁶⁹ Nietzsche recognized 'the opponent of Dionysus'. Armed with the maxims 'virtue is knowledge; man sins only from ignorance; he who is virtuous is happy', Socrates rejected instinct, and with it the Dionysian element in art.

Taken together, the oppositions between Apollo and Silenus and Dionysus and Socrates take on the familiar form of a semiotic square.⁷⁰ For while the oppositions between Apollo and Silenus and Dionysus and Socrates are relations of contradictories, the famous Nietzschean distinction between Apollo and Dionysus, and the implied distinction between Silenus and Socrates, are both relations of contraries. Between Silenus and Socrates, the twin spokesmen of a world unredeemed by art,⁷¹ the distinction is best expressed by their attitudes to death. According to Silenus, death is to be preferred to life because life is nothing but

⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 35.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 45.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

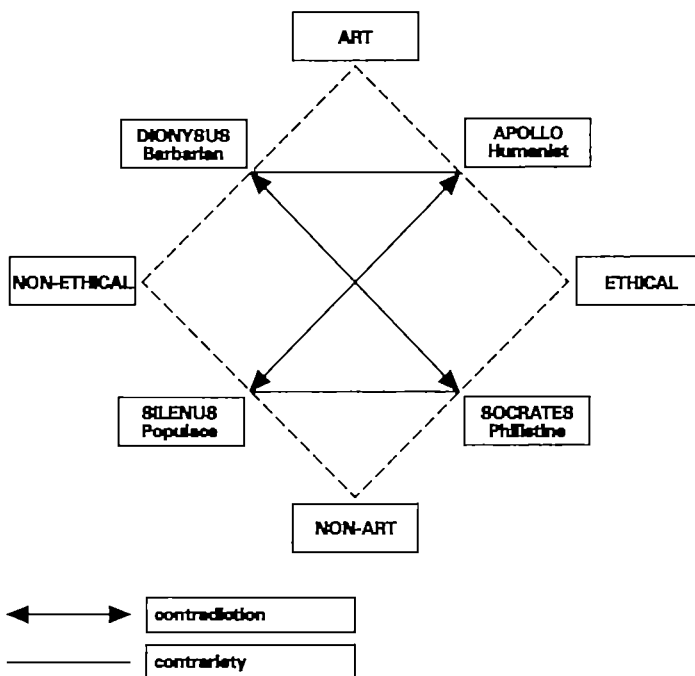
⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 53, p. 37.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 89.

⁷⁰ See A. J. Greimas, 'The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints', in *On Meaning*, London 1987, pp. 48–62. (See Figure)

⁷¹ The similarity between Socrates and Silenus (first noted by Plato, *Symposium*, 215) was a commonplace in the classical tradition of which Nietzsche was unquestionably aware, although he does not draw attention to it in the *Birth of Tragedy*.

suffering; Socrates, having rejected the life-affirming redemption available in art, also prefers death, but only because 'knowledge and reason have liberated [him] from the fear of death'.⁷² Thus while Silenus expresses a pre-aesthetic nihilism, Socrates is the exponent of an philistine moralism. Just as Silenus is the anaesthetic expression of the Dionysian, so Socrates, in whom 'the Apollonian tendency has withdrawn into the cocoon of logical schematism',⁷³ is the anaesthetic counterpart of the redemptive art of Apollo.



The realization that *The Birth of Tragedy* offers a four-cornered mapping of art and its alternatives, allows us to perceive more clearly its affinities with Arnold's categories in *Culture and Anarchy*. Although their evaluation of each alternative is by no means identical,⁷⁴ Arnold and Nietzsche articulate the range of positions in congruent terms. In both cases, the distinctions offered are between two forms of culture (the Dionysian and the Apollonian; the barbarian and the humanist) and two forms of non-culture (Silenus and Socrates; the populace and the philistine), and on the other axis between two forms of ethical life (the Apollonian and the Socratic; the humanist and the philistine) and two forms of the non-ethical (the Dionysian and the Silenian; the barbarian and the populace). On this classification, Silenus and the populace remain outside any recognizable culture; the barbarians taste the primitive sweetness of Dionysus; the humanists bathe in the glow of Apollonian light, and Socrates and

⁷² Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 96

⁷³ Ibid., p. 91.

⁷⁴ Nietzsche valued the aristocratic virtues of the barbarians rather than the scholarly virtues of the humanists admired by Arnold, and would, one suspects, have considered Arnold an archetypal culture-philistine.

the philistines perversely resist all the sweetness and light that culture offers. In the delineation of the spectre of philistinism there is therefore striking agreement. The philistine is not merely the spokesperson for one type of culture against another, nor someone for whom culture remains essentially alien, but someone who actively negates the very culture whose benefits they might be expected to share and appreciate. However, in ascribing a motivation to the philistine position, Nietzsche is able to conceive of a more alarming possibility than Adorno can contemplate. To clarify the distinction, it is useful to examine a text that reinterprets the *Birth of Tragedy* in Adornian terms—Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Odysseus or Socrates?

Despite Habermas's analysis of the Nietzschean undertow in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,⁷⁵ the echoes of the *Birth of Tragedy* in Adorno and Horkheimer's discussion of Odysseus and the Sirens remain obscured. In the first section of the *Birth*, Nietzsche quotes Schopenhauer's image of 'the individual human being... supported by and trusting in the *principium individuationis*' as being like a sailor sitting in his frail boat 'in a stormy sea that, unbounded in all directions, raises and drops mountainous waves, howling'.⁷⁶ For Adorno and Horkheimer, that sailor is personified by Odysseus whose adventures have confirmed for him 'the unity of his own life, the identity of the individual',⁷⁷ while the Sirens represent one of the 'powers of disintegration' which lure the individual back to the 'womb' of 'prehistoric myth'. Since, according to Nietzsche, 'it is only through the spirit of music that we can understand the joy involved in the annihilation of the individual',⁷⁸ it is easy to detect in the Sirens' song the music of Dionysus which 'does not heed the single unit, but even seeks to destroy the individual and redeem him in a mystic feeling of oneness'.⁷⁹ In their invitation to subject the self to nature, the Sirens rehearse what Nietzsche terms the Dionysian cry of nature: 'Be as I am. Amid the ceaseless flux of phenomena I am the eternally creative primordial mother, eternally impelling to existence, eternally finding satisfaction in the change of phenomena.'⁸⁰

Odysseus, in 'dread of losing the self',⁸¹ plugs the ears of his sailors with wax and has them bind him with ropes to the mast of his ship. Although enraptured by the intoxicating sweetness of the Sirens' song, he is unable to respond to it. Thus, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, the song of the Sirens 'is neutralized and becomes a mere object of contemplation—becomes art'.⁸² As the temptations of a participatory and self-annihilatory response are resisted, so the Dionysian music of the Sirens is transformed into an Apollonian object of individual appreciation, a

⁷⁵ J. Habermas, 'The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-reading *Dialectic of Enlightenment*', *New German Critique*, vol. 26, 1982, pp. 13–30.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷⁷ T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Verso, London 1973, p. 32.

⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 104.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104, see also Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 32.

⁸¹ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 33.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

harmless concert. In this way, as Adorno and Horkheimer put it, 'Apolonian Homer' forges a link between art and individuation.⁸³

If Adorno and Horkheimer's interpretation of the Sirens is read as a reworking of the *Birth of Tragedy*, it soon becomes clear that Odysseus's resistance to the Sirens is the counterpart of Socrates's rejection of the Dionysian. The oarsmen with wax in their ears are not deaf to the beauty of the Sirens' music but deaf to the sound of music; Odysseus, however, remains sensible to the beauty of the Sirens' song, yet can only act as though insensible to it. What he forces himself to resist is the aesthetic itself; he is literally tied to a philistine position.⁸⁴

For Adorno and Horkheimer, Odysseus is the prototype of the capitalist who simultaneously deprives his employees of the promise of well-being that the aesthetic invariably offers while at the same time forcing himself to remain indifferent in order to maintain the efficiency of his enterprise. But the ropes that bind Odysseus to the mast and so allow him to dominate nature also imprison him within a purely mechanical world-view: according to Adorno and Horkheimer, 'machinery disables men even as it nurtures them'.⁸⁵ This is a profoundly Arnoldian conception of the philistine. Just as Odysseus was bound to the mast of his ship, so Arnold's Victorian philistines were in 'bondage to machinery',⁸⁶ tied to the belief that the generation of wealth was an end in itself; the humanists might 'disentangle themselves from machinery', but the philistines cannot escape their preoccupation with 'industrial machinery, and power and pre-eminence'.⁸⁷

By using the Arnoldian image of the philistine externally constrained by ties of his own making, Adorno and Horkheimer are able to remould the Nietzschean narrative of the *Birth of Tragedy* around the story of Odysseus. But in doing so, they lose one essential Nietzschean insight. For Nietzsche, external constraint is a consequence of philistinism and not its cause. In contrast to Odysseus, Socrates is a philistine whose power of resistance comes from within: 'While in all productive men it is instinct that is the creative-affirmative force...in Socrates it is instinct that becomes the critic'. When his *daimonion* speaks, it always dissuades: 'in this utterly abnormal nature, instinctive wisdom appears only in order to hinder conscious knowledge'.⁸⁸ Even if his followers eventually become 'chained by the Socratic love of knowledge',⁸⁹ Socrates himself is not tied to the machinery of domination, but someone through whom the spirit of negation speaks freely and spontaneously. He is not prevented from responding to music of Dionysus, but liberated from the impulse to do so.

Of course, Nietzsche no sooner creates this philistine monster than he

⁸³ Ibid., p. 46.

⁸⁴ Fredric Jameson's reading points to this conclusion without ever reaching it, see *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic*, Verso, London 1990, pp. 151-4.

⁸⁵ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 37.

⁸⁶ Arnold, *Culture*, p. 50.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 71.

⁸⁸ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 88.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

seeks to tame it. Socrates may have rejected art, but Socratism's insatiable quest for knowledge 'speeds irresistibly toward its limits where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck'⁹⁰ Hostility to art is thereby transformed into a 'destitute need for art', as the wisdom of Socrates leads inexorably back to that of his look-alike Silenus. Redemption is then to be glimpsed in the utopian figure of a Socrates who practises music, an Odysseus who can safely sing along with the Sirens. Yet for all his protests that philistinism will recreate the need for art, Nietzsche, unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, never confuses unfulfilled desire for art with the absence of desire for art. For Nietzsche, the lack of desire for art is a destructive force that eventually reproduces the conditions in which art first became necessary, and although he then hopes for another aesthetic redemption, there is no sense in which the destruction of art itself constitutes or even calls for that redemption. In Socrates, philistinism takes the form of direct and spontaneous negation; unlike Odysseus, he offers a model for what Nietzsche once sarcastically but perhaps prophetically termed 'the philistine as the founder of the religion of the future'.⁹¹

The Ecstasy of Philistinism

Although philistinism may still be invisible, its historical position as the most recent in a sequence of spectral negations suggests that it is not so much unrealizable as temporarily disembodied. So where might it appear? The natural place to look is within the Marxist tradition which has frequently laid claim to a privileged and terminal position in the history of negation. Communism, Marx famously remarked in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 'represents the positive in the form of the negation of the negation'.⁹² In economic terms this meant that capitalist private property was 'the first negation of individual private property', and communism's negation of capitalist private property the negation of the negation.⁹³ Since atheism's negation of religion was seen to be analogous to the communist negation of private property,⁹⁴ it too was the negation of a negation. And by this measure, not only atheism, but also anarchism, and nihilism, qualify as negations of a negation, with the result that communism can be seen to embody the sum of all the negations of the negation: 'Religion, family, state, law, morality, science and art are only particular forms of production and fall under its general law. The positive abolition of private property and the appropriation of human life is therefore the positive abolition of all alienation, thus the return of man out of religion, family, state etc. into his human, i.e. social being.'⁹⁵

The implication that communism includes atheism, anarchism, nihilism, and every other negation of capitalism's negation of man's social being has usually been acknowledged: Marx recognized the importance of Feuerbach's atheism and Proudhon's anarchism, and Lenin a debt to

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

⁹¹ Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, p. 16

⁹² K. Marx, *Early Texts*, Oxford 1971, p. 157

⁹³ Marx, *Capital Volume I*, New York 1906, p. 837

⁹⁴ Marx, *Early Texts*, p. 157

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 149

Chernyshevsky's nihilism; communism was more than just an atheism, an anarchism, or a nihilism, but it nevertheless incorporated these perspectives. However, the argument has never been extended to include philistinism, and in consequence the arts have long enjoyed a privileged position in Marxist theory. Marx and Engels envisaged that 'with a communist organization of society, there disappears the subordination of the artist to local and national narrowness... and also the subordination of the artist to some definite art', but not the dissolution of the artistic activity. Priest and politician may disappear, but the amateur creative artist remains, along with his counterpart, the after-dinner critic.⁹⁶

The fact that Marxism has never straightforwardly identified with philistinism may well be a consequence of the spectral quality of philistinism itself. In the absence of any actual philistines, Marxists have never sought to create them, and so have assumed that whereas in other spheres the negation of the negation involved the disappearance of the first negation—private property, religion, the state—in the case of the arts, the negation of the negation somehow remained an internal matter, merely requiring the negation of one type of artistic activity by another. As a consequence, it has often been argued that art is an ineradicable part of the social being of humanity, and as such not a practice that is in its entirety subject to the dialectic but one through which the dialectic works. For Adorno, it is precisely this quality of the aesthetic that is its distinguishing quality. Using the implicitly Nietzschean opposition between (Dionysian) Greek tragedy and the (Apollonian) Greek pantheon to illustrate the point, Adorno argues that the dialectical contradictions within art are the defining characteristic of its utopian promise: 'The unity of art history is captured by the dialectical notion of determinate negation. It is only in this way that art can fulfil its promise of reconciliation'.⁹⁷ In Adorno's thought, art is, as Eagleton puts it, 'contradiction incarnate'.⁹⁸

Even those like Beech and Roberts who criticize Adorno for making his dialectic 'not the dialectic of art and its other... merely the dialectic of art inscribed by its other' imagine that it is possible to 'assimilate the moment of art to philistinism'. For them, philistinism is 'an empirical and discursive construction... which shifts and slides along the edges of what is established as proper aesthetic behaviour. Consequently, values, categories and forms of attention once described as philistine can become incorporated into artistic and aesthetic practices through intellectual and practical struggle...' This, they argue 'will not diminish philistinism, only redraw the lines of demarcation' and so inaugurate the beneficial practice of art and the aesthetic, 'perpetually rewriting their borders against the voluptuous and practical demands of the philistine'.⁹⁹

Imagining philistinism as the deconstructive, rather than the destructive negation of the aesthetic bestows on philistinism a role that Adorno gave to art itself—negating the negation within the discourse of the

⁹⁶ K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, London 1976, p. 394. For an extended critique of the Marxist position, see Taylor, *Art, an Enemy of the People*, pp. 55–87.

⁹⁷ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 52.

⁹⁸ T. Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Oxford 1990, p. 352.

⁹⁹ Dave Beech and John Roberts, 'Spectres of the Aesthetic', *NLR* 218, pp. 125, 126, 127.

aesthetic. So rather than offering an alternative to Adorno's dialectic, Beech and Roberts are therefore taking up a position that is already implicit within it. For although Adorno conceived of the dialectical contradictions within art on the model of the opposition of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, he did not thereby exclude the philistine: in his reading of Odysseus and the Sirens, the moment of art is assimilated to philistinism and the lines of demarcation are redrawn as Odysseus's resistance to the aesthetic transforms the Dionysian music of the Sirens into an Apollonian object of contemplation. Unlike the Sirens of post-Homeric legend, Adorno's Sirens do not drown themselves in despair; they just rewrite their song to suit the individual. For Adorno, as for his critics, the dialectic of art and its other involves not the destruction of art but its continuation in other forms.

Because Beech and Roberts's spectral philistine is the product of cultural exclusion, he is just as externally constrained as Odysseus himself: both are prevented from participation, but neither is actively opposed to the aesthetic, and so it only requires development within the arts for them to be incorporated as its appreciative audience. In contrast, Nietzsche's Socrates is directly opposed to the Dionysian art of tragedy. He is 'the murderous principle' who seeks to destroy 'the essence of tragedy',¹⁰⁰ and although he inspired the Euripidean attempt to write an Apollonian drama, this did not lead to the renewal of tragedy. Dionysian art cannot be assimilated to Socratic philistinism: having abandoned Dionysus, Euripides is abandoned by Apollo, and tragedy dies 'by suicide, in consequence of an irreconcilable conflict'. And when it is dead, there arises 'the deep sense of an immense void'.¹⁰¹

Although Nietzsche imagines that the philistine destruction of art will eventually recreate the need for art, philistinism does not function as merely the negative expression of a new form of art. On the contrary, the Nietzschean figure of Socrates offers a clear picture of the nature and impact of philistinism as a negation that operates not from within the dialectic of art but from without.¹⁰² On this model, even if art is viewed as 'contradiction incarnate', philistinism stands outside it as a form of ecstatic contradiction. Art is not then assimilated to philistinism but annihilated by it, and although the resulting void may yet contain some positive value, that value need not be aesthetic.

The point at which the narratives of Marx and Nietzsche converge is not, therefore, in the Dionysian imperative that art express the body and its pleasures, but in the Socratic negation of art. Nietzsche's Socrates provides the missing model for a philistine negation of the aesthetic

¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 86, p. 92.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76

¹⁰² In this form, philistinism can be seen as what Foucault, referring to atheism and nihilism, once described as a thought from the outside 'A thought that stands outside subjectivity, setting its limits as though from without, articulating its end, making its dispersion shine forth, taking in only its invincible absence; and that at the same time stands at the threshold of all positivity, not in order to grasp its foundation or justification but in order to regain the space of its unfolding, the void serving as its site, the distance in which it is constituted and into which its immediate certainties slip the moment they are glimpsed' M. Foucault and M. Blanchot, *Foucault/Blanchot*, New York 1987, pp. 15–16

negation of humanity's social being—a negation that does not perpetuate art's interminable negation of itself but takes the dialectic beyond art altogether. As such, he offers to the Marxist tradition a way of seeing art that stands outside the discourse it negates and so promises not just an end to aesthetic ideology, but a liberation from art itself.

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The Social Ownership of Capital

Over the last twenty years a number of governments have sought to reconcile the competing claims of capital and labour by encouraging employees to acquire ownership of capital in lieu of wage or salary increases. In the post-Keynesian world of stagflation, this has often been a trade-off between consumption against savings and investment in which wages are 'deferred' for a share in capital. The countries where this has taken place include Sweden, Australia, the United Kingdom and, surprisingly, the United States. From Scandinavian wage-earner funds to Anglo-American pension funds, ownership of corporate equity through share markets has, more or less successfully, been transferred from personal and corporate owners of capital to groups of employees organized around the workplace. While these financial forms were by-products of macroeconomic policy, they have also been represented as contributions to social welfare.

There is now a range of social ownership models which involve significant

transfers of capital and steps towards new types of 'common ownership'. Communism may have collapsed but social ownership has inexorably, if often surreptitiously, been on the increase. Many governments have, as a matter of policy, shifted from 'pay-as-you-go' pension schemes to funded arrangements. Often, as in the UK, this has also involved a shift from public to private provision, though it is possible for a publicly-run scheme to involve the accumulation of a fund just as it is possible for private schemes, as in France, to be run on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis. By 1994 the world-wide accumulated assets of pension funds totalled \$10,000 billion, equivalent to the market value of all the companies quoted on the world's three largest stock markets. While the great majority of these funds are held by US and UK funds, there are also significant holdings in Japan, the Netherlands, Ireland, Argentina, Peru, Columbia and a number of other South American states. The two largest pension funds in the world, TIAA-CREF (the Teachers' Insurance and Annuity Association—College Retirement Equities Fund) and CALPERS (California Public Employees' Retirement System), both in the US, have assets of \$140 billion and \$100 billion respectively. If investment regulations allowed, either could buy any American company on the US stock markets. The largest pension fund in the UK is the jointly managed Post Office and British Telecom Fund with assets of over \$35 billion. Again, in terms of size, it could buy any UK quoted company, including British Telecom itself. Many other pension funds are larger than their sponsoring organization.

But the 'policy-holders' in these schemes generally have little or no control over their functioning, as we shall see when we look more closely at the operation of financial markets and the global power of financial institutions. In the UK nearly 80 per cent of all pension fund assets are managed by banks and similar institutions. This control is very concentrated: in 1995 the top five investment managers controlled nearly two-thirds of all UK pension fund assets. While regulations and legal judgements governing the use of these funds have required that they be invested using the most narrow criteria, this has manifestly failed to prevent abuse or under-performance. Despite the well-publicized problems of private pension provision, the potential of the 'unseen revolution' in social ownership has not been much considered in the preparation of the Left's alternative economic and social policies. The inclination of New Labour is to defer to financial markets and 'professional fund managers' with no real understanding of the implications of the current political economy. While there are significant opportunities here for a socialization of the accumulation process, this is only possible if it is recognized that the move towards more dispersed share-ownership has aggravated a number of the characteristic vices of the Anglo-American stock markets. The big funds are notorious for their short-term investment practices, spurring unproductive and costly take-over battles, and prioritizing short-term dividend payments at the expense of broader economic and welfare considerations. In both Britain and the United States a majority of employees is now covered by privately funded schemes, a development linked to the privatization of welfare and the decay of public provision. Since some of these schemes are poorly-devised or under-performing, and in any case, since many are not covered by them at all, the end result is to aggravate inequality and insecurity.

We should not be surprised that social budget cuts, the spread of privatization and the attempt to dump long-accepted commitments has provoked strikes in France, Greece and Italy. There has also been widespread concern at the frequent misappropriation of funds, which has dogged the new 'social ownership' sector, whether pension schemes, Savings & Loans or housing associations. The most notorious case in Britain recently has been Robert Maxwell's purloining of some £400 million from his employees' pension fund. This led to the 1995 Pensions Act, to protect such funds from such abuse—the TUC, however, points out that the new Act does not offer sufficient protection nor any element of democratic control.

So what can we make of these hugely important forms of mediated ownership at a time when New Labour has rejected state ownership of industry and embraced 'regulated' capitalism? Should the new mass of policy-holders reconcile themselves to an entirely passive role? Should trade unionists leave pension problems to the financial experts? Is there a 'third way' which could use a new concept of property—neither public nor private—for socially progressive ends? And, if so, does this render obsolete public provision and state enterprise?

Sweden: Revolution and Counter-Revolution

The most explicit attempt to transfer the control of corporate capital to labour was contained in proposals developed by Rudolf Meidner of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (Landsorganisationen, or LO) in 1975–76. This aimed to change the ownership structure of the Swedish economy through collective profit-sharing by way of wage-earner funds.¹ Although the proposals introduced in 1984 were watered-down, they were still described by the Ministry of Finance as an attempt to address 'the inability of market forces to accommodate social and humanitarian considerations'.² The macroeconomic justification was to resolve the 'economic stabilization conflict', tackling inflation by means other than unemployment. It wanted to 'find ways of securing a widespread improvement in profits compatible with equal income distribution and a retained rise in costs'.³ It rejected the necessity for a trade-off between efficiency and equality, price stability and full employment.

Meidner's original proposal required companies over a certain size to issue new shares equal to approximately 20 per cent of profits. The shares would be owned by wage-earner funds but their financial equivalent would remain with the companies as working capital and contribute towards increased investment. The funds would be controlled by employees via their trade unions. In return for wage restraint, and wage equalization through collective bargaining, the funds would steadily increase the employees' power to shape corporate decision-making. They would enforce wage solidarity by neutralizing excess profits and

¹ Jonas Pontusson, 'Sweden. After the Golden Age', in Perry Anderson and Patrick Camiller, eds, *Mapping the West European Left*, Verso, London 1994

² Ministry of Finance, *Employee Investment Funds*, Stockholm 1984, p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10

contribute to the welfare system by distributing their surpluses to the national pension fund system (ATP).⁴

The project, stated Meidner, was

reformist in the sense that private ownership and free markets are accepted to a large extent, but it is socialist in so far as fundamental values of the labour movement are built into it. The model is based on a firm socialist ideology but recommends at the same time practical methods to attain the goals... It comes close to what... a leading ideologist of the Swedish labour movement called 'provisional utopias'.⁵

The employers identified the Meidner legislation as posing a major threat and mobilized massively against it, urging that non-wage-earners were largely excluded from the scheme and warning that trade union leaders would gather too much power if they could sack the boss.

The 1984 legislation was greatly diluted. It provided for five regionally based funds, financed from payroll and profits taxes—at 0.2 per cent and 20 per cent respectively—which then purchased existing shares, not the new ones which were an essential part of the original proposal. Each of the five management boards was to contain nine members appointed by the state, five of whom were to represent workers' interests. But the boards were to function as passive investors, remaining uninvolved in corporate affairs, and were limited to holding at most 8 per cent of the voting equity of any single company. They were to achieve a target annual rate of return of 3 per cent which was to be transferred to the ATP. By the end of 1990, the accumulated funds amounted to only 3.5 per cent of the total value of Swedish company shares quoted on the Stockholm stock exchange. This was in contrast to the original proposals which, it was calculated, could build up to 49 per cent of the equity of companies over thirty-five years at an annual profit rate of 10 per cent.⁶ Both Meidner and Pontusson argue that the substantial export of Swedish capital in the 1980s ultimately made the Swedish welfare model unworkable.⁷ Was this the ineluctable consequence of 'globalization' or could the original, full-blooded version of the Meidner scheme have prevented capital flight? I shall return to this issue later because it raises the whole question of the importance and power of social ownership.

Whether the compromised Swedish system of the 1980s contributed in any way to investment and growth in the Swedish economy is arguable because it only bought existing shares from other shareholders and introduced no new capital. In the meantime, wage restraint contributed to corporate profits, paying for the profits tax which enabled the limited transfer to social ownership. Swedish workers gave up wage increases in order to buy corporate equity which added nothing to capital formation or job-creation. The system left corporate decision-making just as it was.

⁴ Pontusson, 'Sweden', p. 29.

⁵ Rudolf Meidner, 'Why Did the Swedish Model Fail?', *Socialist Register*, London 1991, p. 219.

⁶ Pontusson, 'Sweden', pp. 31, 52. Also see *Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), Three Years with Employee Investment Funds, An Evaluation*, 1988.

⁷ Meidner, 'Why Did the Swedish Model Fail?'; and Pontusson, 'Sweden'.

Reflecting on the abandonment of 'the issue of ownership as the essence of socialism',⁸ Meidner concluded that 'the decline and disintegration of the Swedish model is thus a matter of concern not only for the Swedish labour movement, but for the Left as a whole'.⁹

The US and the UK: The 'Unseen Revolution'?

Ironically, in the same year as Meidner's original proposals were published, Peter Drucker in the US wrote provocatively, 'if "socialism" is defined as "ownership of the means of production by the workers"—and this is both the orthodox and the only rigorous definition—then the US is the first truly "Socialist" country.' This was because in 1976 pension funds in the US owned 25 per cent of the equity capital of US business, 'more than enough for control'.¹⁰ In a chapter entitled, 'The Revolution that No One Noticed', Drucker argued: 'Even more important, especially for Socialist theory, the largest employee pension funds, those of the 1,000–1,300 biggest companies plus the 35 industry-wide funds (those of the college teachers and the teamsters for instance) already own control of practically every single one of the 1,000 largest industrial corporations in America.'¹¹

Demonstrating ongoing conceptual confusion, he continued:

in terms of Socialist theory, the employees of America are the only true 'owners' of the means of production. Through their pension funds they are the only true 'capitalists' around, owning, controlling, directing the country's 'capital fund'. The 'means of production', that is, the American economy... is being run for the benefit of the country's employees. Profits increasingly become retirement pensions, that is 'deferred compensation' of the employees. There is no 'surplus value', business revenue goes into the 'wage fund'.¹²

This was contrasted with the situation in Yugoslavia where, he argued, workers or their representatives control the enterprise yet have no say in the allocation of capital which remained a state monopoly. Surplus value accrues to a state fund and not to a 'wage fund'. He also contrasted the US situation with that of Sweden. Commenting on the Swedish Labour Party's 1975 proposals for the 'attainment of socialism' and 'industrial democracy', he stated that the 'plan proposes to use 20 per cent of the *post-tax* profits of every large Swedish company to buy shares of the company and put them in a nation-wide pension plan. By 1975, however, American companies had already put 30 per cent of their *pre-tax* profits, or at least twice as much as the Swedes proposed, into pension plans primarily invested in equity'. The Swedish plan would take another twenty-five years to achieve what American pension funds had achieved in terms of ownership of industry by 1975.¹³ He concluded that 'only in the United States do the employees both own and get the profits, in the form

⁸ Meidner, 'Why Did the Swedish Model Fail?', p. 211

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 220

¹⁰ Peter F. Drucker, *The Unseen Revolution. How Pension Fund Socialism Came to America*, Oxford 1976, p. 1

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2 'Own control' is Drucker's way of saying that they own at least one third of the shares.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 38

of pensions, as part of wage income'. Believe it or not, 'the United States alone, in terms of economic structure, has made the final step to a genuine "socialism", in which (to use Marxist terminology) "labor" as the "source of all value" receives the "full fruits of the productive process" .. In other words, without consciously trying, the United States has "socialized" the economy but not "nationalized" it.'¹⁴

Under this equivalent of a social contract, in times of wage restraint, many US employees were allowed to keep their pension entitlements based on notional wage increases. This process started during the Second World War with government-imposed wage ceilings and high taxation. Unions and employers saw pensions as a tax-exempt way of paying wages by deferring them into the future. The employer would contribute to pension entitlements as if the employees' income was not frozen or linked to some index. This process recurred in other periods of wage restraint. Although it is only one reason for the rise of US pension funds, which now own a third of US stock markets through their investment in corporate equity and other securities, it is an important one.¹⁵

Similarly in the UK, investment funds have been set up to which employers and employees usually contribute a percentage of salary, alongside National Insurance contributions for a basic state pension. The funds are then invested in corporate and government securities and other financial 'assets', the returns from which are put towards the payment of pensions. The system, which had long existed for some sections of the work-force, received an enormous boost from the pension reforms of the Labour government in 1974. In a compromise between the competing models of state and private provision, the government introduced the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) from which employers could 'contract-out', establishing or adding to their private schemes. Barbara Castle, the Minister of Social Security at the time, recalls that 'the SERPS which I introduced was a perfect example of the need for cooperation between the state scheme and private occupational pension schemes as the best way of bringing Beveridge up to date'.¹⁶ The government also introduced other changes in social policy: 'It was all part of the Social Contract which we had entered into with the trade unions, guaranteeing "a social wage" in return for the voluntary moderation of wage demands.'¹⁷

By 1994, thanks partly to these proposals for occupational pension arrangements, and also to the linking of pension contributions to notional salary increases while current wages were 'moderated', pension fund assets in the UK amounted to \$600 billion, a figure equivalent to over 60 per cent of GDP and, as in the US, constituting over one-third of the stock market.

Paradoxically this broadening of the base of share-ownership boosted the leverage of traditional financial institutions, as the new compact

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 4.

¹⁵ Jeremy Rifkin and Randy Barber, *The North Will Rise Again*, Boston 1978, pp 86-8.

¹⁶ Barbara Castle, 'Lessons for Labour', *Soundings*, no. 1, Autumn 1993, p. 41.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 39.

between capital and labour handed significant economic power to financial fund managers. The US and the UK make up most—around £4,500 billion—of the £6,000 billion global pension fund assets. About 80 per cent of this money is controlled, or ‘managed’ in the parlance, by a small group of US, UK and Swiss banks and insurance companies: in the US, Morgan Guaranty, Bankers’ Trust, Citibank, the Mellon Bank and the Harris Trust and Savings Bank dominate fund management, while in the UK the big five are Mercury Asset Management (until 1995 a subsidiary of Warburg’s), Phillips and Drew Fund Management (owned by the Union Bank of Switzerland), Schroder Investment Management, BZW (Barclays Bank), and Prudential Portfolio Management. These ‘professional fund managers’ have virtually total discretion over what happens to the money.¹⁸ This makes them the arbiters of company take-overs, privatization flotations, corporate policies, as well as, internationally, the purchase of government debt with knock-on effects for national exchange rate and interest rate policies.¹⁹ The state may have ‘socialized’ the ownership of substantial chunks of corporate capital through pension funds. But contrary to Drucker’s optimistic analysis, employees do not control US and UK corporations, as most are well aware. Instead, they and their savings are hostages to a financial regime which systematically searches for the highest monetary rate of return regardless of the consequences for employment, the environment, or the state of the social infrastructure. Indeed this regime is so short-sighted that it can be outperformed by the small ‘ethical investment’ sector which kept clear of investments in arms production, the meat industry and other recently problematic areas. Meidner concluded that ownership was a fundamental social objective but, as British and American employees have discovered, effective control is equally important.

The ‘Revolution’ in Australia

The Australians have approached these issues differently, accepting that funded pension schemes have their difficulties but seeking to develop labour-controlled policies and institutions around them. Australia’s social contract, or ‘Prices and Incomes Accord’, was negotiated between the new Labor government and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) in 1983. It soon led to

the spread of earnings-related and employer-provided retirement benefits as tax advantaged trade-offs for employees in lieu of wage increases. Government legislation introduced in 1992 (the Superannuation Guarantee Act) requires employers to contribute increasing proportions of wages on behalf of employees into privately managed retirement capital funds, which are equally controlled by capital and labour and have a particular public status. The result has been the growth in Australia of a major new repository of private savings for domestic investment, a doubling of those in the workforce compulsorily saving for their own retirement, and the establishment of large new capital funds

¹⁸ Rifkin and Barber, *The North Will Rise Again*; Richard Minns, *Pension Funds and British Capitalism: The Ownership and Control of Shareholdings*, Oxford 1980; Jerry Conkley and Laurence Harris, *The City of Capital*, Oxford 1983; Ron Martin and Richard Minns, ‘Undermining the Financial Basis of Regions’, *Regional Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3 (1995); Richard Minns, ‘The Political Economy of Pensions’, forthcoming in *New Political Economy*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1996).

¹⁹ Minns, ‘The Political Economy of Pensions’

which are accountable to the workforce through equal representation on the trustee boards which control the funds.²⁰

This arose because, given the centralized freeze on wages, trade unions demanded occupational pension benefits previously open only to management, senior executives and those with careers in the public sector. In macroeconomic terms, it was designed to boost domestic savings so countering high foreign debt and breaking the wages–prices spiral.

Although the above references to the power of employees and unions again overstate the matter, these developments contrast significantly with both the Swedish system, and the form of provision now prevailing in the US and the UK. They echo Sweden because of the clear lead given by trade unions, and they are similar to the US and UK because they have actually succeeded in spreading social ownership—partly, I suspect, due to the lack of any explicit claim by ACTU that the plan would lead to ‘socialism’. Despite scare stories by employers that the proposals would mean the end of civilization, they came to be accepted within the Accord.²¹ Part of the price of this consensual approach was delegation of control to private financial institutions, including US and UK fund managers, who have amassed an army of ‘service providers’—‘asset consultants’, administrators, custodians, and investment managers—to share in the fees. Having said this, the unions did set up their own financial consultancy company (Industry Funds’ Services), their own trustee advisory and educational structure, and have agreed deals with the largest insurance companies to bring down the price of administration, and held an annual Conference of Major Superannuation Funds which has now become an Australian institution.

Some critics believe the Accord to have been a disaster.²² Wages were restrained but prices were not. Unemployment at the end of the 1990–92 recession was higher than at the end of the previous one in 1982–83. Access to social welfare was restricted, the right to tertiary education lost, and other social services effectively means-tested. These critics appear to accept the philosophy of the Swedish social contract model while rejecting the British version because it ‘did not encourage self-awareness’.²³ However Geoff Gallup, the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party of Western Australia and advisor to British Labour politicians, has argued that improvements in the overall social wage did take place, that two million new jobs were created between 1983 and 1996, and, most importantly, that access to superannuation was created for 90 per cent of employees, compared to 40 per cent in 1983.²⁴ It has also provided government-financed contributions for the lower paid. By 1995 the total assets of Australian pension funds amounted to A\$180

²⁰ Diana Olsberg, ‘Australia’s Retirement Income Revolution: A New Model for Retirement Savings and Investment Politics’, *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, vol. 15, 1994, p. 284.

²¹ See also Diana Olsberg, ‘Australia’s Retirement Income Revolution: a Finnish System Down-Under’, *Scandinavian Journal of Social Welfare*, vol. 4, 1995.

²² Pat Brewer and Peter Boyle, ‘End of the Illusions? Accord Politics and the Left in Australia’, *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, no. 1, April–June 1994.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²⁴ Geoff Gallup, ‘Keating a Jump Ahead’, *The Guardian*, 1 March 1996.

billion—equivalent to 45 per cent of GDP—with the prospect of ten-fold growth by 2020. However, it is unclear whether this has increased net aggregate national savings and even less clear whether it has added to the growth of pension funds, even with a compulsory system, since most of this growth has come from investment returns and the rise in the stock market.²⁵ But the trade unions have attempted to address the political and economic issue of domestic investment by allocating a percentage of funds to a Development Australia Fund which is jointly managed by them and the largest mutual insurance company in Australia.²⁶ Whether this is 'incorporation' or 'corporatism' (a matter to which I will return) remains to be seen as the trade unions now pursue their strategies without the Labor government which was defeated at the 1996 general election after thirteen years of Accord politics.

Singapore: Imperial Preference

Contrary to anything conceivable back in the UK, or indeed in the former British colonies of Australia and the US, in 1955 the British authorities in Singapore established a state-run investment authority for a nationally funded pension system. As a result, Singapore now provides an interesting example of an investment system determined and controlled by the state, much to the chagrin of advocates of privately controlled pension and investment regimes.²⁷ The Singapore Central Provident Fund (CPF) has also sprung to prominence as a result of a visit in January 1996 by Tony Blair, leader of the British Labour Party, where he made a presentation on the concept of the 'stakeholder society', expressing interest in Singapore's system.²⁸

Like Australia and Chile, Singapore has a compulsory system of pension savings which are invested on stock markets. Singapore, however, is unique because of its state-run CPF which administers and invests the contributions. By 1990 the CPF funds amounted to a sum equivalent to 75 per cent of GDP, higher than that of the UK, US and Australia—and of anywhere else in the world with funded, invested pension systems except the Netherlands. In exchange for 40 per cent of salary contributed to the system, the implicit 'social contract' in Singapore allows parts of the CPF to be used for specific activities by the contributors. A percentage of wages is paid by employers and employees up to a certain salary ceiling.

²⁵ David Knox, 'Superannuation—Revisions, Reforms and the Next Millennium', mimeo, Centre for Actuarial Studies, University of Melbourne 1995, and interview with the author, May 1995 (research visit funded by the British Academy)

²⁶ Development Australia Fund prospectus, 'Development Australia Fund', DAF Nominees, September 1995.

²⁷ B Butler, M Asher and K Borden, *Singapore Versus Chile. Comparing Models for Welfare Reform*, Adam Smith Institute, London 1995 which states that 'UK pension managers could probably run rings round the Singapore CPF' (p. 8). The comparison of Singapore and Chile included advantages and disadvantages for Singapore, but only advantages for Chile. See also the World Bank, *Averting the Old Age Crisis. Policies to Protect the Old and Promote Growth*, Oxford 1994 which claims 'Centralized provident funds are even more concentrated. If these funds were to invest in corporate equities, public officials could gain control of corporate affairs, a back door to nationalization' (p. 214)

²⁸ Various commentaries include, 'Blair Raises the Stake', *The Economist*, 13 January 1996, pp. 33–4, 'Stakeholders Willy-Nilly', editorial, *Financial Times*, 16 January 1996, 'Raising the Stakes', *The Guardian*, 17 January 1996, section 2, pp. 2–4

The contributions are tax-exempt, as they are in most other funded systems, but withdrawals are also free of tax. The funds can be used for a wide range of benefits including house purchase, investment in stocks, bonds and non-residential property, health care, life and disability insurance, tertiary education, and of course, retirement. In some ways, this is taxation by another name. However, the dedication of part of the contributions to specific purposes has encouraged members of the scheme to regard them more as personal savings than taxation.²⁹

The CPF management board is appointed by the Ministry of Labour and consists of eleven people, at least six of whom represent the government, the employers and the employees—each of which has two representatives. The CPF administers the system and 'plays a very important role in the economic and social life of Singapore. Its design, structure and management are of crucial importance, since the well-being of most citizens of Singapore is tied to its performance.'³⁰ Two-thirds of the labour force participate but since casual workers, part-timers and certain categories of contract workers are not covered, and only have access to a minimal state safety-net, 'a significant minority of workers will face financial difficulty because their ability to save for retirement has been extremely limited.'³¹

The system is said to have contributed to Singapore's gross national savings rate which, at 40 per cent of GDP, is the highest in the world. But since funds are in part dedicated to 'merit goods', a relatively smaller proportion, compared to other funded schemes, goes toward investment in corporate equity on the stock market. CPF balances are invested through the Singapore Government Investment Corporation, and the major part is invested abroad. The funds have not been used to provide loans to the government or other statutory bodies for public housing or infrastructure. Instead, the government has consistently financed all current and capital expenditure from operating revenue by running budget surpluses which include the profits from CPF overseas investment. These profits are not credited directly to the CPF. This is sometimes described as an implicit tax on members of the scheme—'although this may be offset by the tax subsidies'.³² However, 'the pool of savings the plan generates can help stimulate the city-state's economic growth by providing a long-term, predictable and large flow of funds for investment; high growth rates, in turn, lead to higher income levels which produce economic security both before and during retirement.'³³

So the Singapore model provides a 'stakeholder' approach by dedicating a part of what would be called taxation elsewhere to specific purposes. Yet it reduces the redistributive role of the state because contributions are allocated to individual accounts, and it provides a lower level of 'social ownership' transfers of corporate equity. In a way, it demonstrates the antithesis of the Swedish, Australian, UK and US models examined so far. 'Social ownership' through increases in share ownership by collec-

²⁹ For more details see Mukul G. Asher, 'The Singapore Model', in Butler et al., *Singapore Versus Chile*, pp. 12–22.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 17, 13

³¹ Ibid., p. 15

³² Ibid., p. 19.

³³ Ibid., p. 21

tively organized funds, predominantly private, is replaced with a larger role for the state in investment.

Latin America: 'Revolution Within the Revolution'

Finally we come to Chile, which has become the model for other countries in South America. Chile demonstrates how governments can reduce or relinquish their role in the provision of pensions in the face of the allegedly burdensome public expenditure implications of ageing populations. The aim is to transfer responsibility to the private sector, increasing savings, investment and economic growth, and therefore the resources available for welfare payments.³⁴

The Chilean scheme was introduced in 1981 by Pinochet's military regime. It was the first government in the world to replace its public system with a mandatory, privately funded and administered plan.³⁵ It requires contributions of 10 per cent of earnings from employees. Its implicit social contract meant that, although employers had to increase all wages by 18 per cent, which was the estimated increased cost to the worker, this was less than the reduced cost to the employer. The funds are invested by twenty-one 'administradores de fondos de pensiones' (AFPs) from which workers can choose. The funds may invest up to 30 per cent in corporate shares, while 50 per cent must be invested in government and related securities. In fact, 61 per cent is invested in these securities and only 11 per cent in common stocks or equities.

As with other schemes, we must look at who really gains and loses in this privatized structure. Firstly, evidence on coverage suggests that when the public-sector role is finally eliminated, large groups will be left uncovered.³⁶ Secondly, several of the AFPs are owned by US investment funds or banks, adding to global concentration of control. For example, Provida, the largest AFP, with 25 per cent of all pension fund assets in Chile, is 42 per cent owned by Bankers Trust, while Santa Maria, the second largest, is 51 per cent owned by Aetna Life and Casualty. In addition, the administrative costs are 15.4 per cent of annual contributions, compared with only 0.5 per cent in Singapore.

Whether this system has helped the Chilean economy is arguable. The evidence on increased saving rates is inconclusive because all that has happened is that a large part of the national accounting for pensions disappears from the public balance sheet only to appear in the private. The main argument that proponents of the private model are left with is that the change from public to private administration and investment creates a qualitative change in economic behaviour, promoting more productive investment and greater economic growth, removing the direct role of government, and improving capital allocation by increasing the role of the market.

³⁴ World Bank, *Assessing the Old Age Crisis*.

³⁵ Karl Borden, 'How Chile Broke the Pensions Chain Letter', in Butler et al., *Singapore Versus Chile*, pp. 23–35.

³⁶ Jaime Ruiz-Tagle, 'A Pensions System Based on Individual Funded Arrangements. The Case of Chile', paper presented to the Conference on Financial Security in Retirement: the Role for Employees, Congress House, London, November 1995.

Such assertions are articles of faith, backed only by anecdotal evidence. The AFPs are said to have provided a third of the capital for the *Compania de Telefonos de Chile's* \$1.6 billion expansion and *Celulosa Aranco's* \$1 billion forestry and pulp project, as well as hydroelectric projects. Another way of looking at it is, as Eamon Butler has put it, not that they have provided new capital but that 'this growth of markets has provided a pool of capital that has made possible the *privatization* of the state telephone, power, forestry and other industries which has deepened economic democracy in Chile',³⁷ whatever the last phrase is supposed to mean. In sum:

private markets allocate capital more efficiently to investment opportunities with higher rates of return to the economy ... It is that qualitative change that finally produces the *higher growth* rates in private retirement plans that are capable of both eliminating the long-term need for government subsidy and increasing expected *pension benefits*. Without such a qualitative assumption there is no basis for the privatization alternative. *One must logically either accept it as a premise or reject privatization as a policy choice.*³⁸

The Hijacking of the Revolution

The Swedish experience reveals the political difficulty of increasing social ownership for explicitly 'socialist' ends. The US and UK experience shows the importance of control as opposed to, or as well as, ownership. The case of Australia is similar but highlights various possibilities for influencing investment policies. Singapore demolishes the argument that funded state systems are somehow a dampener on the economy, while Chile directs our attention to the validity or otherwise of the whole privatization theory which presents the transfer of economic power as a macroeconomic solution to rising public expenditure and wage increases.

In terms of the provision of pensions itself, there appears to be no compelling social or economic reason to replace publicly run 'pay-as-you-go' systems of social insurance with redistributive benefit formulas.³⁹ 'Pay-as-you-go' means that pensions are paid out of current income as they fall due, usually by the state.⁴⁰ Current income is made up of national insurance contributions—or their equivalent—plus taxation and other government revenue. As a result, one generation funds the previous generation's retirement. 'Funded' systems are essentially different: each

³⁷ Eamon Butler, 'What Model for UK Welfare Reform?', in Butler et al., *Singapore Versus Chile*, p. 9, my emphasis.

³⁸ Borden, 'How Chile Broke the Pensions Chain Letter', p. 28; emphasis in original except for last sentence.

³⁹ Roger Beattie and Warren McGillivray, 'A Risky Strategy: Reflections on the World Bank Report Averting the Old Age Crisis', *International Social Security Review*, vol. 48, nos. 3–4 (1995). In addition, a recent pamphlet by Barbara Castle and Peter Townsend makes this and other points very clearly. For example, 'the choice between funding and PAYG [pay-as-you-go] is a political, not an economic one.' *We Can Afford the Welfare State*, London 1995, p. 18.

⁴⁰ The main exception is the French system of pay-as-you-go for private-sector employees (*repartition*) which is run jointly by employers and employees and which, it appears, has managed to adjust to competing pressures. See Emmanuel Reynaud, *Les Retraites en France; Le Rôle des Régimes Complémentaires*, *Les Études de la Documentation Française*, Paris 1994.

generation pays for its own retirement by investing its savings on capital markets. This is the 'deferred wages' model which has arisen partly because of social contracts on current wage increases. This system relies on the unproven theory of increasing private savings, investment and economic growth which will enable pension claims to be met.

It has been argued that countries with 'generous' benefits must now increase structural unemployment to achieve 'fiscal restraint' and increase 'labour market flexibility'. Concern is expressed at the build-up of public debt as a percentage of GDP, of which pensions' liabilities are seen as a substantial part.⁴¹ Since these are 'unfunded', requiring payment as they fall due, this will put pressure on fiscal restraint, especially where there are ageing populations and an increasing ratio of pensioners to workers and contributors. Let us examine this issue.

First, the alternative proposed, transferring the provision of pensions to the private sector, is unconvincing in its own terms. Such proposals do nothing to improve capital formation and economic growth so as to increase the ability of a society to pay. The liabilities remain the same—'unfunded'—because, without economic growth, the pension claims must still be met from current income, including share dividends, interest on bonds and contributions from workers. Or they are met from current income by a realization of assets through the sale of the shares to a third party who, in turn, gives up current consumption or savings to purchase the shares. There is, in other words, no non-zero-sum game created by increasing private savings as opposed to public savings, unless the national economy grows.

Second, and for similar reasons, it is difficult to see how transferring the 'burden' to the private sector lessens 'taxes'. They are merely privatized, though they make the public-spending balance-sheet look better to the critics. The required 'taxes' remain the same, unless benefits or deferred wages—along with the deals on current wages—are cut, or coverage declines, as indeed they have.

Third, there is not the same questioning of the fairness of current fiscal systems, their redistributive potential, and their commitments to various related policies. For example, the significant fiscal concessions to private pension systems also have implications for 'unfunded' future liabilities, especially when they are set to increase as private provision increases.

Fourth, the Singapore experience, along with other examples of more productive uses of pension funds by state and trade union organizations which I shall consider later, indicate that there are ways of using pension funds to create productive growth and employment, and to strive for broader social objectives by more fully using social ownership through public and other collective organizations.

Finally, critics of present public arrangements say nothing about the need to create greater employment, only more flexible labour markets.

⁴¹ For example, see the World Bank, *Averting the Old Age Crisis*

But greater employment is part of the equation which leads to more secure pension systems. It creates higher numbers of contributors, greater income to pension schemes and fiscal revenues, and thereby lowers the dependency ratio which concerns so many who write of demographic 'crises', 'time-bombs', 'burdens', and 'soaring' liabilities.⁴²

The conclusion is that the social ownership 'revolution' contained in deferring wages in exchange for a share in capital has turned out to be mainly an unequal trade-off designed to control labour costs, or at least the proportion of wages to national income. Now that we have examined the evidence and the arguments, and understand more about the way in which control has actually been transferred, it is fair to argue that the balance be redressed. There is no need to be dogmatic about alternative policies for control and investment policy—it should depend on the individual arrangements in different countries. In Britain we have a substantial private sector in pension funding, representing two-thirds of GDP and owning over a third of the stock market. How can we develop an approach which exploits the social ownership that this implies, but more along Meidner's lines?

A Meidner Plan for Britain

I build here not only on Meidner's explicitly socialist objectives but also on others such as Robert Pollin's arguments for greater 'democratic voice' in financial systems to create a higher level of commitment to communal and social objectives.⁴³ This involves the creation of a financial system which is more active in the creation of corporate activity primarily concerned with productive employment, communal welfare and social development. It means greater collective influence over the deployment of financial capital through forms of social ownership—a new 'third way'.

Andrew Glyn states that 'viable policies for expanding employment entail costs... Unless social democracy can formulate and gain support for such an alternative, mass unemployment is set to continue as the mechanism by which distributional conflict and other challenges to capital are contained.'⁴⁴ This is just the problem which Meidner and others identified over twenty years ago when the Keynesian age of consensus politics over growth and welfare expenditure collapsed. Wage-earner funds were originally designed to tackle this dilemma by combining social and humanitarian policies through collective profit-sharing, increases in capital from profits, and the transfer of capital ownership to workers as the vehicle for increasing social accountability. Such a policy is not about 'stakeholding' but about a transfer in ownership and control.

The basic objective of such a scheme is to use pensions and other

⁴² For example, the World Bank, *Averting the Old Age Crisis*; The Federal Trust, *The Pensions Timebomb in Europe*, London 1995; plus various articles in the *Financial Times* and elsewhere alleging an explosive mix of demographic and public expenditure ingredients; see Minns, 'The Political Economy of Pensions'.

⁴³ Robert Pollin, 'Financial Structures and Egalitarian Economic Policy', *NLR* 214, pp. 26–61.

⁴⁴ Andrew Glyn, 'Social Democracy and Full Employment', *NLR* 211, p. 55.

collectively organized funds to achieve greater economic and social welfare than that produced by the alienating, narrow aim of maximizing the rate of return to the exclusion of almost everything else. This involves a greater role for the state in creating an appropriate framework, more active use of shareholding power, a larger role for employees and contributors, a greater role for the state in investment management, and provision of a set of alternative investment opportunities and fiscal provisions. Moreover, we need to structure our proposals so as to provide adequate pensions for those who currently lose out. *

Guidelines for Social Investment

The argument for radically different social investment policies mainly rests on the fact that participants in these huge savings vehicles are not only pensioners and future pensioners, but also employees, residents, parents, children and so on. Teresa Ghilarducci has characterized this as the 'whole participant' approach to investment, based on a concept proposed by Randy Barber of the Council for Economic Organizing in Washington.⁴⁵ Although there is still much work to do on the concept, it recognizes that pension funds, as well as their participants, rely on employment growth and not just on investment returns to deliver pensions. High profits from investment at the cost of reduced jobs do not create better pensions or more secure pension funds. Instead of worrying about public expenditure and budget deficits caused by rising pension obligations we should be more concerned about social and economic policies which will link the level of employment to national welfare obligations. →

The government would issue guidelines on the 'whole participant' approach to social investing, making it clear how broader criteria for investment and active shareholding will lead to more secure pension funds. Here we need to distinguish between 'ethical investment' and 'social investment'. Generally speaking, ethical investment is 'passive' while social investment is 'active'. These descriptions are not meant to be value judgements, they merely define different approaches which in practice increasingly overlap. In ethical investment certain investments or shares are avoided because the companies concerned are deemed to undertake activities which investors find personally or socially unacceptable—for example, the production of tobacco or arms, or trade with repressive regimes. In contrast, active investment, which includes social investment but is not synonymous with it, uses shareholdings to try to effect changes in companies by voting at Annual General Meetings, or to promote particular activities such as employment creation or investment in areas such as renewable energy sources.

Shareholder Action

Activist shareholding began in the US and has been used for a range of objectives, including the promotion of employees' interests, especially where pension funds of trade unions and jointly managed industry funds

⁴⁵ Teresa Ghilarducci, 'US Pension Investment Policy and Perfect Capital Market Theory', *Challenge*, July–August 1994

have seen the advantage of combining pension fund interests with those of the employees who are contributors to the funds. The process appears to have begun with the seminal case of a company called JP Stevens where unions used their pension fund shareholdings in the company's banks to support an industrial dispute with the company.⁴⁶ Since then, unions such as the Teamsters have used corporate governance techniques to link management changes in the structure of a company to the rights and interests of their members. The Union of Operating Engineers has invested hundreds of billions of dollars in property development, creating hundreds of jobs for its members. The Central Pension Fund of this union obtains 30 per cent of its revenue from contributions, and these are only forthcoming if members are employed.⁴⁷ Other unions have threatened to move their large pension fund accounts away from financial institutions which use non-union labour. All this is done within the parameters of providing financial returns to the fund, including profits from property developments using union labour in which the fund invests, and maximizing the participation rate. Public-sector pension funds, especially those of individual states, have also been active in extending some of the civil rights and anti-apartheid concerns of the 1960s when shareholder action began. Many have now adopted policies to promote affirmative action in companies they invest in and which employ workers in Northern Ireland, according to the McBride Principles.

This brings us back to the question of whether the increasing globalization of capital makes nationally based policies unworkable. The answer is that it does not. Yet the globalization argument has unfortunately become commonplace and has risen to pre-eminence in the UK. For one senior adviser to the Labour Party:

By the nineties, globalization—the unrestricted movement of capital, goods and information throughout the world—had limited severely the ability of national governments to achieve social-democratic goals by Keynesian means. Governments that tried to do so, such as François Mitterrand's in the early eighties and the Swedish Social Democrats in the early nineties, were ruthlessly punished by world bond and currency markets. In a globalized economy there can be no going back to the policies that underpinned social democracy in the post-war period.⁴⁸

'Globalization' has become a convenient excuse for avoiding intervention. The fact is that multinational companies and, in particular, financial institutions with their bond dealers, and financial futures and options divisions, are substantially owned by pension funds and other collectively organized funds, partly as a result of social-democratic solutions to macroeconomic problems. This means that major financial dealers—with the possible exception of individual billionaire dealers such as George Soros—are indeed controllable by their social owners. Because pension funds have such huge amounts of finance to invest, the larger the company, the larger the pension fund stake. So whether a British company operates in the United Kingdom or the United Arab Emirates

⁴⁶ See Rifkin and Barber, *The North Will Rise Again*.

⁴⁷ Ghilarducci, 'US Pension Investment Policy', p. 10.

⁴⁸ John Gray, 'Revival of Reforms', *The Guardian*, 8 July 1996, p. 13.

is irrelevant in terms of ownership and control. Even the activities of individual currency speculators could be countered if social ownership of other financial dealers was used effectively. Instead of throwing up our hands in despair at the new 'reality'—the dogma of 'economic fundamentals' controlled by the dark and invisible global forces of the currency markets, and multinationals stalking the world, punishing governments and wiping out employment like some unstoppable medieval plague—we can actually do something about it. But that means gaining control of social ownership. →

The tension between ownership and control is highlighted in a recent article by Gerald Holtham.⁴⁹ He suggests that the payment for 'merit goods' through social mechanisms such as taxation could be supplemented by the state establishing a social fund which owned 15 per cent of all quoted companies and used the revenue to help pay for collective goods. If the British Labour Government of 1945 had acquired such stakes, he argues, instead of nationalizing whole industries, the annual return would have been 7.5 per cent on the investment, significantly greater than the rate of economic growth—'the community could have its own patrimony, a literal commonwealth, to support collective consumption'. With various other measures, within ten years the fund could → amount to about £50 billion. 'The community fund would act not unlike a fully funded state pension scheme, such as exist in many countries.' Using a passive investment policy, in which management would be contracted out to 'professional fund managers', there would, however, be no need for the state to 'interfere' in the management of industries, a state of affairs which, he concludes, is 'moribund'.

This proposal ignores what fund managers would do with the investments. It is unlikely that the state could ignore what was happening in its name in the case of hostile take-over bids, job reductions, management salary increases which attracted public attention, investment policies which damaged the environment, or relocation from particular areas or communities. It is difficult to accept that the state could or should take a passive role with such a substantial shareholding in the corporate sector. 1

Employee Involvement

Under a Meidner-type plan for Britain, employees or their representatives would be entitled to 51 per cent membership of all pension fund management and investment committees. However, given this, two issues need to be addressed.

First, democratization itself is not a sufficient condition for securing changes in policy. In the 1980s, I attempted to raise finance from pension funds for local investment in Enterprise Boards. Many trade unionists are wary of 'alternative investments' which, because they are animated by social goals and not being peddled by traditional financial institutions, could lead to a legal challenge and personal liability. To →

⁴⁹ Gerald Holtham, 'The Common Good', *New Statesman and Society*, 12 January 1996, pp 20–1

meet such concerns there needs to be a much more sophisticated framework of analysis and guidelines as discussed above which demonstrates the validity of a broader approach.

Second, some critics would argue that such proposals are simply new versions of the failed policies of incorporation or corporatism. The priority of the trade union movement becomes helping capitalism be more competitive. In Australia, for example, critics argue that the basic premise of Accord supporters is that they believe they can develop a 'scheme of economic and social reconstruction to be carried out by the capitalist state, which is somehow in the interest of all classes'.³⁰ These warnings are not without substance, but they can easily fail to address the new realities or simply confirm the model of passive share-ownership which is so convenient to the banks and funds. Trade union-influenced pension fund investment has demonstrated the potential of shareholder action solely on behalf of employees and against the perceived corporate interest, as has been shown by the Teamsters and the Union of Operating Engineers, as well as the action against JP Stevens.

To argue for the incorporation thesis is to accept the real social contract that has emerged, namely that between governments and financial capital, of ownership of capital by labour and paid for by labour, but control by financial institutions. This is partly because of the confused position of labour about the implications of ownership, especially where 'interference' by the state or labour-oriented institutions is deemed to be damaging to the economy and to the rate of return for pensioners. By a neat conflation of class interests, corporation tax now becomes a punitive tax on labour because investment returns to pension funds are paid after tax.³¹ The situation is also a problem for labour because ownership is often seen to compromise the traditional bargaining position over wages. The roles of capital, labour, employer, employee, worker and pensioner lose their clarity in a world of social ownership. This is used by financial interests to retain control of funds which are then invested in ways which arguably have little positive effect on capital formation and economic growth, contrary to what proponents of the system allege, and do not provide adequate coverage for groups on the margins of the labour market.³² We clearly need to separate out the different class interests once again, so that labour can take more action using its social capital. *This* is the purpose of the strategy of democratization.

State Management and Fiscal Policy: A Universal System

The responsibility for implementing an alternative policy cannot just be left to employees or trade unions. It is unfair to expect them to accept this based only on government guidelines and exhortation. A clear political lead is required. The government should establish a National Provident Fund (NPF) which would take over the management of all public-sector-funded occupational pension funds, such as those of local

³⁰ Brewer and Boyle, 'End of the Illusions', p. 72

³¹ Drucker, *The Unseen Revolution*, p. 44

³² Martin and Minns, 'Undermining the Financial Basis of Regions', Minns, 'The Political Economy of Pensions'

authorities throughout the UK, and utilities still in public ownership such as the Post Office, the BBC and the Bank of England. This would immediately give the NPF control over £50 billion—instead of over a ten-year period as in the Holtham proposal—or around 10 per cent of the total assets of UK pension funds. The management board of the NPF would be appointed by government and half its members would be employee representatives from the pension funds it has taken over. Its activities could be regionalized to cover the catchment areas of the local authorities. Regional Boards could manage the local authorities' funds in accordance with NPF policies and government guidelines on social investment. The NPF itself would manage the other public-sector funds. Experience has shown that public-sector-based pension fund investors are most effective at holding companies to account. This is because they have no corporate conflict of interest.

The NPF could also develop a universal pension scheme to benefit those who are poorly covered at present. Individuals would be able to open individual savings accounts, or these could be made mandatory. Individuals could also use these savings for other purposes up to a certain limit, such as for housing or further education needs. But the new arrangements would also be partly based on pay-as-you-go principles. There would be annual negotiations between trade unions and management of the NPF. According to a formula laid down by law, they would decide how much of the surplus to transfer to the low-paid contributors and pensioners, and how much in terms of credits to give to unemployed members of the scheme. This system should be based on what the French describe as 'solidarity between generations'.

Furthermore, to boost the surplus, improve pensions and to provide a more progressive investment policy, tax relief should be given on certain 'designated asset categories'. This means that, to the extent that a pension fund invested in securities like regional development bonds, investment certificates, regional enterprise boards or development agencies, pensioners would receive a proportionate rebate on their pension. This would provide a financial incentive for these investments while increasing 'the rate of return' to pensioners. There would be no tax loss to the Exchequer since the purpose of encouraging these investments is to promote taxable economic activity.

We have come full circle in this examination of the social ownership of capital. Despite the somewhat incongruous arguments about the repeal of Clause IV of the Labour Party's constitution (which advocated the common ownership of the means of production), the process has proceeded apace, aided and abetted by social-democratic deals over macro-economic policy. Social ownership is acceptable but control is not—this is what the Clause IV debate was really all about. At the same time, we are content to argue for greater 'regulation' by the state as part of continuing concerns about the market's operations, while shunning state 'control'. How more social ownership through welfare models and trade-offs for current wage increases, less state control through increased 'professional' management, and greater regulation of this enlarged private-sector activity by the prodigal state all fit together in a logically consistent manner escapes me.

In contrast, the initial proposals I have outlined combine different mechanisms for gaining control of social ownership and using it to benefit contributors in a 'whole participant' approach—full guidelines on social investment; employee control of investment committees; a national fund to invest public-sector pension funds in accordance with government and collectively determined policies; a regionalized approach to encourage further democratization of control; the promotion of certain investments through the fiscal system of general benefit to contributors and their communities; and a structure designed to offer greater coverage and improved pensions. This would be the start of a 'Meidner for Britain'.

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Labour Governments: Old Constraints and New Parameters

It is good to be able to explore again the pattern of constraints likely to beset a Labour Government.¹ For a long time now, such concerns have been definitely off our collective agendas because of the string of heavy electoral defeats for Labour. The bulk of the UK Left spent the 1980s discussing not how to use power but how to win it: how to create a bloc of electoral forces sufficiently large to bring an end to Thatcherism. We all read Eric Hobsbawm, struggled with the possibility that the Forward March of Labour had well and truly Halted, and contemplated the politics of electoral pacts. Yet that seems for the moment now to be behind us. It seems that realistically we can begin to anticipate again the arrival of Labour in power; and, because we can, it is time to go back to literatures and arguments prevalent on the Left in the 1960s and

¹ This is an amended version of a paper first presented to a seminar at the International Centre for Labour Studies in the University of Manchester. The author is grateful for the advice and comments given by members of the Centre who attended that seminar, and for subsequent guidance from Leo Panitch, Adam Tickell, Robin Blackburn and Edward Coates. Since the interpretation of New Labour presented here is not one widely held on the Left, it is even more essential than normal to emphasize that responsibility for the line of argument in this article is the author's alone.

1970s, literatures concerned with the aspirations of incoming Labour governments and with the barriers likely to be erected in their path. Of course, here as elsewhere, the past is never a perfect guide to the future. Some at least of the barriers awaiting a Blair government will be new ones—in form certainly, even in basic character—but I suspect that most will not. For in a very real sense we already know much of what will constrain an incoming Labour Government, because we also know what constrained Labour governments in the past. So in order not to be overly-surprised when the constraints come, and in order to avoid the temptation then to re-invent the wheel, this is an opportune moment to look back, and to consider again what happens to Labour governments whenever they try to rule UK capital.

Electoral and Governmental Continuities

Looking back at the record of the Labour Party as a political force in the UK since 1900, the over-riding impression that we need to keep before us is that of *weakness and fragility*. We need to remember how regularly hopes have been created only to be dashed, promises made only to be broken, agendas set never to be sustained. We need to remember how previous generations of Labour politicians—both in opposition and in power—tended to fall short of even the most modest aims of the people sustaining them; and we need to contemplate at least the possibility that a Blair-led Labour government will disappoint its supporters in a similar way. Amid the understandable pleasure, for many on the Left, at the prospect of a Conservative electoral defeat at last, we need to keep a very tight grip on any creeping sense of euphoria. For there are very good reasons to anticipate that the performance of New Labour in power will actually be *poorer* even than that of the Labour governments which preceded it. These reasons are rooted ultimately in underlying continuities in Labour politics which the term 'New Labour' serves only to obscure. Such continuities are, at one and the same time, electoral and governmental in character.

In electoral terms, it is striking how much assistance from external events and forces the Labour Party has always needed to create an electoral bloc sufficiently substantial to give it parliamentary power. It is also striking just how quickly that bloc has then eroded. After all, it took two world wars and a massive capitalist depression to wean sufficiently large numbers of UK workers away from an electoral loyalty to Liberalism and Conservatism, to give Labour its first (and still its largest) parliamentary majority in 1945. It then took another thirteen years of Conservative mismanagement and anachronistic fustiness to enable Harold Wilson fleetingly to reconstitute the width of that electoral bloc in 1966; and in neither instance did Labour manage to retain over the long term the majority it had so gratuitously won.

For in each case Labour was largely the passive recipient of electoral swings. Its own politics never normally possessed sufficient magnetic force to redraw the shape of electoral Britain by the power of its own programme and possibilities alone. The forces shaping that electoral map were largely external to Labour and beyond its control. They came (and the Labour Party flourished); they went (and the Labour Party was

unable to prevent their going). It is true, of course, that the Labour Party did slowly build up its core vote by its own organizational and ideological efforts: defeating the Communist Party for the loyalty (by 1945) of the majority of unionized workers. But its capacity as a party to sweep up the bulk of the unorganized working class (in 1945) and of the new white collar and managerial strata in the private sector (in 1966), was largely not of its doing. Admittedly, it promised full employment and welfare to woo the first in 1945; and it promised industrial modernization to woo the second in 1966. But in each case Labour was incapable of preventing the erosion of its electoral support beyond a reliable core: and since 1966 (and especially 1979), as we know to our cost, the Party has also seen its core vote dramatically erode. Labour is now the party of public-sector workers (both proletarian and semi-professional), not of the organized working class in total, and is having to win back the votes of skilled workers in private industry—votes that, between 1945 and 1966, it briefly but unambiguously came to think of as its own.

This electoral fragility was, on the surface, the product of a particular pattern of performance in government. But it was also, in a deeper way, the product of the relationship that Labour politicians habitually establish with their own electorate, whether in government or not. Labour has never established what we could call—in a Gramscian sense—a hegemonic relationship with its own electoral base; and it certainly is not doing so now. Even in its heyday the Labour Party never created an extensive and sophisticated socialist universe—of newspapers, clubs, communities and institutions—within which to fuse itself to its people.² It never created a labour movement in anything other than name. Instead of consolidating a strong class movement behind it, to sustain its radicalism in office, the Labour Party in the past was satisfied merely to establish an episodic and ephemeral relationship between itself and its people, a relationship wholly mediated through the pursuit and registering of the vote. And, even as an electoral machine, the Party's presence at grass-roots level has lain (and continues to lie) dormant between elections, only swinging into frenetic activity in the run-up to election day. In those moments it has always insisted—certainly by implication and often explicitly—that the whole task of the Left should be reduced to door-knocking and vote-catching. But the very fact that the Labour Party in the vast majority of its constituencies has not crossed any doors since the last election, tends to mean that fewer doors open to it, and that doors open to it with increasing indifference, except in circumstances of Tory crisis that the Labour Party itself can do little to precipitate³. Not surprisingly then, Labour majorities when they come tend to be accidental rather than created, and invariably prove to be as tenuous as they are fortuitous.

² The main channels of communication between the Party and its electorate have remained predominantly in anti-socialist hands; which is possibly why Labour leaders so regularly find it necessary to accommodate and explain their politics to the largest of newspaper proprietors. For relations between Tony Blair and Rupert Murdoch, see H. Porter, 'Zealous Moderate', *The Guardian*, 18 July 1995, Second Front, pp. 2–3; and C. Leys, 'The British Labour Party's Transition from Socialism to Capitalism', in L. Panitch et al., eds, *The Socialist Register 1996*, London 1996, p. 16.

³ For a fuller development of this argument, see D. Coates, *The Crisis of Labour*, Oxford 1989, ch. 4.

I will return to the question of hegemonic politics—to the issue of the stability, commitment and meaning of the Labour vote—in the last section of this article; but let me add now that the electoral fragility of Labour since 1966 has been massively reinforced by the under-performance of Labour in power. Labour Governments hitherto—even when they have had parliamentary majorities—have fallen into a regular and a depressing mould; and indeed have done so on a *declining* trajectory—in the sense that the performance of each majority Labour government to date has been, in retrospect, less satisfactory than the one before. A brief résumé of the overall performance of each post-war Labour government makes that very clear.

The Attlee Government—inheriting as it did an extensive wartime planning machine and a culture of cooperation and planning, and facing a momentarily discredited (and briefly less self-confident) capitalist class—did extend public ownership, create welfare institutions and maintain full-employment. However, even it was blown off course by financial crises from 1947. It retreated rapidly from planning and controls towards the end of its tenure in office, and experienced growing difficulties with wage restraint and incomes policy by 1951. But at least Attlee left office with the Party's massive popular vote intact, robbed of power in the end, not by the defection of supporters, but by the vagaries of the UK electoral system.

Not so the first Wilson governments, which had started with such promise (Tony Blair please note) of a *New Britain*—which would be scientific, dynamic, competitive and socially just. The first Wilson governments fell after a prolonged period of tension with the trade unions, and after the first mini-winter of discontent (by 1970 the brief flirtation of sections of the private-sector middle class with Labour was already over, though its trade union electoral base remained intact, if by then largely inert and unenthusiastic). Then in the 1970s the story repeated itself with a louder drum roll and more awesome consequences. For, though it was forced into radicalism by trade union pressure between 1970 and 1974, and entered office against the backdrop of unprecedented industrial militancy and working-class self-confidence, the last Wilson government quickly made a turn to the right, under financial pressure and eventually IMF instruction, at the cost eventually (for Callaghan, if not for Wilson) of a massive winter of discontent and heavy electoral haemorrhaging. As we now know, 1979 was a great watershed. It marked the beginning of the loss of the votes of skilled workers, particularly the votes of skilled workers in the South, workers antagonized by four years of pay restraint. (It was in this respect both ironic and significant that the first Cabinet casualty of that erosion should have been Shirley Williams, defeated in Dagenham in 1979 by the defection of car workers.) From 1979 the Labour Party began to turn itself from the party of the organized working class into the party of the old northern working class. The electoral loyalty of its southern proletarian base was progressively eroded.

The underlying problem was and is very clear. If those Labour governments had wanted, as they said they wanted, to run a successful welfare capitalism in a socially progressive way, they each needed to

put together a bloc of social forces—a governmental bloc—built (if the Swedish model is any guide) primarily around an organic relationship between the party and the unions. But, as we have seen, only twice, and then only briefly, have previous Labour governments possessed such a bloc. What is striking about the first of those periods was how quickly the Attlee Government retreated from the orchestration of such a bloc—abandoning both radicalism and modernization—under the impact of external pressures, primarily from the US, pressure fed directly into the power-equation through sterling crises and dollar shortages. Yet the Attlee retreat was at least largely *imposed*: unlike that of the Wilson government a generation later, when the retreat was far more internally triggered and *voluntary*. The last Wilson government retreated from interventionism (for both radical and modernizing ends) as quickly as it could, after being given what the bulk of its leading members took to be a more conservative mandate by the EC referendum result in 1975. So never in this party's by now long history has its leadership consciously, deliberately and over a long period of time sought to construct such a progressive modernizing bloc; and it is not doing so now. Even in opposition, the Party under Tony Blair is not prepared to be seen in close proximity to the unions; and the unions are so weakened as no longer to be insisting on such proximity. Rather, both are conscious of the electoral price of creating such a bloc in the short time before the next election; and in that sense both the Party and the unions are now immobilized by the legacy of Labour's wasted years: then the Party (and particularly the leadership) did nothing effectively to resist the strident anti-unionism of the dominant liberal-conservative culture.

The pattern of past Labour governments is clear: initial high hopes and grand promises rapidly giving way—via poor performance—to great disappointments and voter alienation. So far at least, Labour has never managed to hold on to power for more than one parliament and a bit; and no Labour government (not even Attlee's) has yet managed to sustain its initial policy stance. Rather, and in every case, Labour's policy shift when in power has invariably been from initial radicalism to eventual moderation at the cost ultimately (with the possible exception of the Attlee governments) of an industrial and electoral confrontation with at least sections of Labour's own proletarian base. Promising much and delivering little, Labour has never yet managed to establish itself as *the* governing party; and because it has not, the question we must face is whether an incoming Blair administration can do any better.

Back to the Future

Blairite optimism that things will be different this time round is currently very high. Supporters of the present Labour leadership would no doubt treat the story I have just told as the story of 'Old Labour', and insist that theirs will be the story of 'New Labour'. Not for them the heady promises of radical change. They will disappoint less by promising less; and by delivering on their more modest promises. As Mandelson and Liddle put it:

New Labour ...in giving renewed expression to the Party's founding beliefs ... is a deliberate move forward from ... the postwar Labour Party of Wilson and

Callaghan.. Modernization is about more than developing a package of attractive propositions that can win Labour power. It is about working through a credible strategy for successful government that avoids the failures of the past.⁴

Yet not all of us are convinced of the viability of this claim, or even that there is very much that is actually new in 'New Labour'. Of course, New Labour likes to *present* itself as qualitatively different from Old Labour,⁵ and it is true that the internal story of the Labour Party since 1983 has been one of a retreat from Bennite radicalism, from the Alternative Economic Strategy and from nuclear disarmament. But the degree of retreat (which *is* marked, and which is indeed the basis of New Labour's claim to be new) actually tells us more about the degree of leftward shift that occurred between 1979 and 1983 than it does about the novelty of New Labour. In many ways New Labour is working its way back to the Party's conventional understanding of how to trigger economic growth through the construction of a close and collaborative relationship with the owners of private capital. It is all very well for Mandelson and Liddle to posit an alternative policy package from the past—of 'centralized planning and state control'⁶—as the epitome of Old Labour. It is all very well for them to contrast the view of 'past Labour governments' on the mixed economy and New Labour's commitment to the rigour of the dynamic market.⁷ That may work for short-term rhetorical and electoral purposes; but it cannot stand as an accurate picture of what previous Labour governments actually did. What previous Labour governments actually did was work *with the grain of market forces, in a collaborative relationship with senior managers in major companies, to trigger privately-generated economic growth*; and that, of course, is precisely what New Labour is saying that it intends to do as well.

Perhaps one reason why New Labour does not recognize its own place in the actual continuity of Labour politics is that the Blairites' own historical memory seems remarkably short. New Labour obviously has a PR reason for asserting its newness: but it is worrying to see its leading apologists so persuaded by their own public relations. That, in its turn, may have something to do with the fact that so many of the leading New Labourites are very young (in actual years and in years of party service) and that it is now so long since Labour was last in power. New Labour is certainly new in *generational* terms. Its leading figures will come to government—if they do—without any direct personal involvement in Labour's last governmental failure; and in that rather trivial sense New Labour does represent a sharp rupture with even the Party's recent past. But any political party out of office for so long has to be 'new' in this way, as one generation of politicians gives way to another, and the Labour Party has certainly gone through such generational shifts on a number of occasions in the past (after 1931, after 1951, and again since 1979). The

⁴ P. Mandelson and R. Liddle, *The Blair Revolution: Can New Labour Deliver?*, London 1996, pp. vii-viii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-30. Royden Harrison counted the word 'new' used 37 times in the hour-long speech by Tony Blair to the Labour Party conference in 1995, of which 13 were references to New Labour! R. Harrison, *New Labour as Past History*, Nottingham 1996, p. 2.

⁶ Mandelson and Liddle, *The Blair Revolution*, p. 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-2.

more important question is whether such a generational shift marks an equivalent rupture in the underlying policy orientations that otherwise link these generations of leaders one to another. The important question is not whether the personalities are new, but whether the arrival of a new set of leading players also signals a qualitative break with the Party's underlying continuities and traditions. →

New Labour likes to present itself as just such a qualitative break and many of the Party's left-wing critics are currently treating Blairite party reforms and policy retreats in equally cosmic terms. So—amid the hype now surrounding the impending arrival of the Blair-led Party in power—it is worth bending the stick the other way: to emphasize the persistence of party traditions, and to place current developments in the context of Labour's underlying policy continuities. It is worth reminding ourselves that the Labour Party has always been a broad coalition of two main groupings, two projects, two political universes: a coalition of *social reformists* (keen to subordinate the power of private capital to progressive social ends) and *bourgeois radicals* (keen to modernize the local industrial base). It is worth reminding ourselves, that is, that in a very real sense *there has always been Old Labour and New Labour*.

The politics of Labour's social reformists have always focused on redistributing power (and resources) from the privileged to the poor. The politics of Labour's bourgeois radicals have always focused on strengthening the competitiveness of local capital, from which to glean surpluses for welfare provision without major policies of income redistribution. So what is new about New Labour is not that the general economic policy stance of the Blairites is fundamentally novel: on the contrary, as I say, in general terms it is simply that into which Labour governments in the past have quickly and consistently settled. What is new in New Labour is that the forces of Old Labour are so weak. It is the *dominance and self-confidence* of the modernizers, not their novelty, which distinguishes the Blair party from its predecessors; and since what Blair calls 'new' has been the dominant policy stance of every Labour government after its brief flirtation with radicalism—since every Labour government has tried to do what Blair says he is trying to do—the fate of earlier Labour administrations does have a relevance for the future of a Labour government led by him.

In the past, when many of us spent our time examining Labour governments, it was the defeat of their radical ambitions, the defeat of social reformism, that tended to hold our attention. Certainly looking back over my writing, that is definitely the case.⁸ And when exploring that—when asking why Left Labourism did not succeed, even when it had the upper hand within the Party (as it did between 1970 and 1975)—what emerged was a picture of fierce and deeply embedded constraints on radical politics. The quickest way to picture those constraints is to imagine a pebble dropped into a pond, with ripples flowing out in ever widening circles. If you put 'Old Labour' in the middle of the circles—let it be the pebble dropped into the encircling constraints—

⁸ See in particular, *The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism*, Cambridge 1975, and *Labour in Power? A Study of the Labour Government 1974–79*, London 1980

then you can move out, making a list of where the barriers lay. In the 1970s they lay firstly within the Labour Cabinet (with the modernizers themselves), then with the civil service, then with sections of organized business (the press and the CBI in particular), then with multinational companies, then with international financial agencies. Those were the old constraints on Labour radicalism; and were Labour to be radical again they would all rapidly reappear.

But Tony Blair is a modernizer. His constraints lie elsewhere—and were not studied much by many of us in the 1970s. We were so angry at Wilson's backsliding from radicalism that we failed to see how inept at economic modernization his governments had turned out to be. Indeed, having revisited the Wilson years with that set of concerns in mind, I think I need to admit to a certain revisionism of my own.⁹ As a modernizer, the first Wilson government was not that bad. It certainly *tried* to create the instruments of state-triggered private-sector regeneration: originally the ineffectual Department of Economic Affairs, and subsequently the much more potent Ministry of Technology—headed, of course, by Tony Benn in his technocratic incarnation as Anthony Wedgewood-Benn. Even the second Wilson government created the National Enterprise Board and took another group of moribund industries and (this time also) firms into public ownership; and in this sense both Wilson governments did at least attempt to modernize the local industrial base. But those attempts were not in the end in any way successful. The Wilson governments both *tried* and *failed* to modernize the UK's industrial base. They failed, in part, because the concerns of macro-economic policy (particularly concerns about inflation and sterling) took precedence over investment and growth (as will doubtless happen again); but they also failed because the bloc of social forces and governmental institutions that could have modernized UK industry in the 1960s and 1970s did not exist, *and was not called into being by them*.

Tony Blair has recently positioned himself in relation to Wilson modernization in the following way:

Today's Labour Party—'New Labour'—is the heir to a proud tradition in the Party's history. The 1945 government combined practicality and idealism in equal measure. It changed Britain in a way that was relevant to the post-war world. It was 'new' Labour. In 1964, Harold Wilson was a modernizer, as his speeches and programmes demonstrate. But, despite the considerable achievements of that government, he was unable to carry through his project in full. The Wilson government did not fully succeed in modernizing the economy or establishing Labour as the natural party of government. Without change within the Party there was bound to be a tension between what he wanted to do and the culture and politics of the Party that had to do it. The modernizing edge was blunted. In the 1990s, a renewed Labour Party is in a much stronger position to lead national renewal.¹⁰

⁹ For the story of the Wilson governments as modernizers, see S. Lee, 'Manufacturing', in D. Coates, ed., *Industrial Policy in Britain*, London 1996; and D. Coates, *The Question of UK Decline*, London 1994, ch. 6.

¹⁰ Tony Blair, 'My Vision for Britain', in G. Radice, ed., *What Needs to Change: New Visions for Britain*, London 1995, p. 10.

Of course, the implication of that reading of Labour's recent past is that the chief barrier to successful modernization lay within the Labour Party itself: hence presumably the Blairite preoccupation with internal party reform. Yet in reality it was not an unreformed party that blocked Wilson's modernization, but an unreformed state. What the Wilson governments, as modernizing governments, lacked more than anything else was a state structure able to trigger private industrial growth, and a coalition of social forces dedicated to the support of that state. Indeed for these purposes, it is useful to think of the UK state as a triangle with the Treasury, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry at its points. A state equipped to trigger industrial growth needs a strong DTI, sustained by powerful interest groups and social forces. What the Wilson governments inherited—and sustained—was a state dominated by the Treasury and its attendant social forces and institutions (in the City) and by the MOD and its military-industrial complex. Labour in the 1960s and 1970s never put together a strong industry ministry; and it never forged a strong coalition of support for such a ministry from either the organized labour movement (on the Scandinavian model) or from private civilian industry (as in Japan). In fact private civilian industry in the UK (that is, local UK manufacturing capital) was—and is—profoundly anti-statist and anti-Labour. It is deeply liberal in its economics and Conservative in its politics. It was in the 1970s. It is now. We are not in Germany, nor Japan. And no matter how many cocktail offensives the Blairites launch, they will never pull UK private capital round just by the force of arguments alone. Old Labour had a way—in theory at least—of effecting a degree of support from private capital: public ownership and planning agreements. Tony Blair has eschewed such vulgar class politics, explicitly promising the UK business community that the involvement of a future Labour government in British industry would be 'limited and specific'.¹¹ But charm is no substitute for power—and because it is not, Blair the modernizer is likely to be no more successful than was Wilson before him.¹²

So on both the social-reformist and bourgeois-radical elements of the Labour coalition, old constraints abound. The general interests of capital have not gone away. On the contrary, the strength and self-confidence of the local capitalist class has been steadily enhanced by nearly two decades of Conservative rule. The present generation of owners and senior managers have an arrogance (and a fat cat mentality) unprecedented since the war. If old Labour was in charge, the Cedric Browns of this world would be giving Labour radicalism a very hard run for its money. Yet, as we know, New Labour is in charge—keener to modernize rather than reform. But such modernizing aspirations still face the *unreformed* features of UK capital as a system. They face a financial sector dominated by short-termism. They face UK-based transnationals geared to global accumulation strategies. They face a local business class imbued with liberal economic ideas, and they face a state dominated by Treasury

¹¹ *The Financial Times*, 1 July 1996, p. 1

¹² On the critical silence of the Blairites on the question of power, see N. Thompson, 'Supply-side Socialism. The Political Economy of New Labour', *NLR* 216, pp. 48–50

thinking.¹³ Old constraints have not gone away: and because they have not, both wings of the Labour coalition would do well to remember Tawney's old adage about Social Democracy and the tiger: that 'you can peel an onion leaf by leaf, but you cannot strip a tiger claw by claw. Vivisection is its trade and it will do the clawing first'. Previous Labour Governments have been clawed to death by the opposition of organized capital; and all the indications are that a Blair government will experience a similar fate. Tony Blair may have beaten Old Labour into silence in order to win power but he cannot, just by that achievement, escape the truth of Old Labour's argument about the constraints on the use of power once won. New Labour might not like it; but Old Labour is right to insist that radical social reform is a prerequisite of industrial modernization, and not its antithesis.

New Labour, New Constraints

If that were not enough, a future Blair-led Labour Government faces two new constraints as well: one externally-imposed, one more self-inflicted.

To take the external one first: namely, changes in the international political economy, and in the positioning of the UK within that political economy. The degree of globalization now underway, and the resulting capacity of the nation state to manage its local economy, is of course currently a matter of great academic and political debate.¹⁴ However, for our purposes, it is enough to notice what is broadly agreed between all the major participants in the UK version of that debate: that increased international mobility of capital (and the intensification of international competition) on the one side, and the associated emergence of a new international division of labour (and the resulting slippage of the UK down international competitive league tables) on the other, have actually *squeezed the space* available in the UK for autonomous state action. This affects both the 'radical bourgeois' and the 'social reformist' project, both modernizers and socialists in the Labour coalition. And since the Labour Party was never very good at pursuing either of those projects in power even when the space was greater, it is hard to see why it will be any more effective when the space is less. Labour did not effect significant social reform, or industrial transformation, even in the 1960s when the UK was still the second most successful capitalist economy in the world system. It is hard to see it doing any better now it faces a globalized financial system, a hollowed-out UK manufacturing base, and a new international orthodoxy of neo-liberalism.

The internal constraint just adds to Labour's difficulties. New Labour prides itself on not being Old Labour, but in the process it has shed some of Old Labour's residual strengths. Old Labour was no great shakes, but—as we saw earlier—it did at least stay close to the unions when it could. It did at least recognise the need for a class base, both for its

¹³ On the detail of this, see Will Hutton, *The State We're In*, London 1995, chs 2–6; and H. Radice, 'Britain in the World Economy: National Decline, Capitalist Success?', in D. Coates and J. Hillard, eds., *UK Economic Decline: Key Texts*, London 1995, pp. 233–50.

¹⁴ See in particular P. Hirst and G. Thompson, *Globalization in Question*, London 1996; and P. Dicken, J. Peck and A. Tickell, *Repackaging the Global*, Manchester International Centre for Labour Studies, working paper 10, 1996.

electoral coalition and for its governmental one. And Old Labour certainly was aware that Labour governments needed to create new agencies of state management if they were to achieve their modernizing goals. New Labour is currently buying none of that. That is why Mandelson and Liddle are right to emphasize the gap between New Labour's economic plans and Old Labour's willingness to involve national trade union leaders in their design: to that degree, New Labour is qualitatively different from the party even in the immediate past.¹⁵ It is also why Roy Hattersley and others are right to emphasize how little of the Croslandite programme of social reform has been taken on board by those closest to the new Labour leadership.¹⁶

Tony Blair seems determined to establish Labour's electoral credentials by demonstrating the Party's distance from the unions, and by eschewing any vestigial class appeal. His rhetoric of stakeholder capitalism allows no space for the creation of new state institutions of planning and control, and puts him well to the right, not simply of Will Hutton, but even of a former Social Democrat like David Marquand.¹⁷ The Labour front bench under Tony Blair operates wholly within the dominant enthusiasms for (at most) only lightly regulated markets (which is but coded language, of course, for leaving private capital to do whatever it will); and has reset its dominant economic project to one of restoring supply-side competitiveness to UK-based firms. As Noel Thompson put it in an earlier NLR, 'since the late 1980s, the Labour Party has advanced a supply-side socialism which aims to increase the flow, enhance the quality and improve the use of factor inputs; the primary objective being to increase productive efficiency, reduce unit costs and, crucially, enhance Britain's international competitiveness'.¹⁸ The Labour Party under Tony Blair is setting itself to go down the route of Clintonite economics, and is already having some difficulty in establishing any clear political water between itself and Michael Heseltine. By buying in so heavily to the dominant neo-liberal paradigm, the leaders of New Labour are ensuring that an incoming Blair government will be even less effective than were either the Wilson or the Attlee governments before it: less effective not simply as an instrument of social reform (where really the Blairites seem to have very few ambitions) but also as an instrument

¹⁵ There is a definite streak of anti-trade unionism in the Mandelson and Liddle version of *The Blair Revolution*; and plenty of early signs of an unwillingness by the Blair leadership to undo the legal framework imposed on the trade unions by the Thatcher government. One example of the tone and content of that anti-unionism can be found on pages 12–13 of Mandelson and Liddle 'British industrial relations has been changed for the better, and its basic legal framework which the Conservatives established will remain in place.' Mandelson and Liddle certainly tie Old Labour to the unions, and want no part of that connection for New Labour. As they put it, 'whereas the old Left saw its job as to represent trade unions, pressure groups and the working class, and the Right saw its role to protect the rich together with powerful corporate interests, New Labour sounds for the ordinary families who work hard and play by the rules' (p. 18). Presumably, on this understanding of trade unions, they are full of people who do not work hard, play by the rules or come from ordinary families!

¹⁶ The Hattersley irritation with Mandelson and Liddle is well captured in his 'Bubble 'n' Squeak' article in *The Guardian*, 27 February 1996. His disquiet with Blairite educational policy has been widely reported and documented.

¹⁷ For Marquand's unease, see D. Marquand, 'Elusive visions', *Guardian*, 24 June 1996, p. 14.

¹⁸ N. Thompson, 'Supply-side Socialism', p. 39.

of economic modernization. *The new internal constraint on Labour is one of a self-inflicted and deeply immobilizing feebleness.*

New Labour and Hegemonic Politics

In pulling the argument together, and looking forward, let me link the new Blairite feebleness to my earlier comments on the need for strong electoral and governmental blocs: on the need, that is, for a genuinely hegemonic politics of the Left. That need—to my mind—is underscored by the manner in which we are now beginning to emerge from a quite remarkable period of right-wing hegemonic politics. For whatever else Margaret Thatcher was, she was genuinely a politician in the Gramscian mode. In the heyday of her dominance, Thatcherism re-established the link between values and policies in UK public life, made ideas (and ideology) central to political leadership, and required of its supporters, not only that they believed its central tenets, but that they lived and applied them to the full. Like all successful political forces in democratic societies, Thatcherism took many of the central *values and aspirations* held by us all (values of liberty and individual rights, aspirations for prosperity and progress), tied them to a series of *operating principles* (in her case, overwhelmingly the principle of the unfettered market), and then steadily, resolutely and with great self-confidence, applied that operating principle, in the pursuit of those values and aspirations, to *policy areas after policy areas*. In the Thatcherite litany, the 1970s was the critical decade—the time in which the electorate's lived and shared experience of the bankruptcy of social democracy created the political space that Thatcherite liberalism could (and did) fill. Out of the years of failed Labour governments, Thatcherism emerged to win the electoral battle, first by capturing the moral high ground, then the policy agenda, and finally political power itself. But Thatcherism was—as our experience of it in power has shown—a profoundly flawed project. Its values were narrow and self-seeking. Its central organizing principle was incapable of delivering sustained economic renaissance, and the policies it engendered were productive only of weak industry, impoverished social services and a divided and scarred society. With the steady dawning of reality over promise, the Thatcherite vision has gone, and with it—at long last—the moral authority of its advocates.

So, in an important sense, we are back to where we were in the late 1970s—with a discredited government, and in need of a fundamental change of direction and leadership. The moral authority of an entire political project—and not just of the government which espouses it—is eroding. Larger and larger sections of the electorate are open to a new vision, new leadership, alternative policies, even a different moral authority. This is why the Labour Party is—at long last—faced with the real prospect of power again.¹⁹ But to realize that prospect—and when realized, to have the moral and social force to use it effectively and to use it well—the Labour Party needs to turn in these last precious months of

¹⁹ How else are we to understand the quite remarkable popularity of Will Hutton's *The State We're In*, except as a clear indication of a deep-seated and widespread hunger in many sections of UK society for a new and radical politics based on a clear critique of the evils of Thatcherism and the inadequacy of free-market capitalism.

opposition to the creation of its own hegemonic project. But it actually is not doing that—except in a very weak and limited way. The shadow cabinet is spending more time scaling down aspirations and restraining policy promises than it is in laying out a coherent programmatic alternative. It makes itself ‘virtually fireproof against Tory attacks’²⁰ at the cost of a progressive and debilitating timidity. In its limpness, the Blair Labour Party stands fully in the tradition of earlier generations of the Party. This limpness (and the corresponding need for strength) were very clear even to a relatively moderate socialist like R.H. Tawney when, in reaction to the fiasco of 1931, he wrote this:

The great weakness of British Labour... is its lack of a creed. The Labour Party is hesitant in action because divided in mind. It does not achieve what it could because it does not know what it wants. It frets out of office and fumbles in it... If the Labour Party is to tackle its job with some hope of success, it must mobilize behind it a body of conviction as resolute and informed as the opposition in front of it... The way to create [this], and the way, when created, for it to set about its task is not to promise smooth things: support won by such methods is a reed shaken by every wind... The function of the Party is not to offer the largest possible number of carrots to the largest possible number of donkeys... To kick over an idol, you must first get off your knees.²¹

Such a Tawneyian—not to say a Gramscian—reading of the nature of modern politics would give a set of distinct and difficult tasks to any Blair-led Labour Party keen to push back the barriers to its effective creation of first an electoral and then a governmental bloc, tasks that the Blair Party seems remarkably reluctant to undertake.

On the electoral and ideological front, it would commit the Party to an out-and-out assault on the contemporary enthusiasm for market-led economic growth. The Party would need to say that the whole liberal-based growth paradigm does not work. It does not work in its own terms, in that it does not provide a mechanism for breaking out of circles of cumulative decline—markets in that sense do not clear. More importantly, it does not work in social and human terms. Its outcomes are just not morally acceptable at the individual level, where its down-sizing and intensification of work processes are producing massive degrees of job insecurity and historically unprecedented levels of personal stress. Nor are its outcomes acceptable at the national level, where it is producing unemployment, the intensification of poverty, a shrinking tax base for welfare provision and a part-time, under-skilled labour force on low wages.

Since the whole liberal project falls foul of well-known deficiencies in neo-classical growth theory, and is simply an excuse for private capitalist

²⁰ ‘A Mighty Whumper at his Enemies’, *The Independent on Sunday*, 7 July 1996

²¹ R.H. Tawney, ‘The Choice Before the Labour Party’, *Political Quarterly* 1932, reproduced in W.A. Robson, ed., *The Political Quarterly in the 1930s*, London 1971, pp. 96, 105. Others, too, have seen shades of Ramsay MacDonald in the rhetoric of Tony Blair. Colin Leys, for example, argued that what both have in common ‘is the theme of class conciliation, wrapped in misty appeals to social bonds that transcend class divisions. When MacDonald spoke of “all practical men and women” Blair talks about “a strong and active civil society”. Both constantly invoke “the nation”. Both have their eyes fixed on the middle-class voter.’ C. Leys, ‘The British Labour Party’s Transition’, p. 20.

excess, it needs to be completely broken with, and a whole new language of socially-determined growth targets and practices presented as a viable alternative—a growth strategy based on trust, cooperation and equality. Now there have been moments when New Labour has looked as though it was poised to commit itself to at least a watered-down version of these new growth strategies—particularly when Will Hutton was taking his country walks with Robin Cook, or when Tony Blair first announced his conversion to the big idea of *stakeholding*. But then he explained to Sir David Frost just how little substance that conversion had,²² Robin Cook was replaced as industrial spokesperson, industrial policy was incrementally deradicalized, and all the time Gordon Brown remained firmly the Treasury's man. Which means, I think, if I am not blinded by too many historical parallels, that the best we can hope for from the ultra-orthodox economics underpinning New Labour is a re-run of the 1960s defeat of George Brown by James Callaghan, or of the 1970s drubbing of Tony Benn by Denis Healey; and even that will require a tougher stance by the John Prescotts of the Party than has currently been evident. Certainly the present deployment of personnel on Labour's front bench means that New Labour's ability to articulate a distinctive and progressive political economy has already fallen foul of its prior determination to appease nervous and conservative financial markets. Labour is not yet in power; but as far as I can tell, the Treasury has already won.

So ideologically (and therefore electorally) New Labour is not articulating a clearly different political vision. And, even if it were, it would in power have to carry that vision into practice by forming a radical bloc of social forces behind its modernizing and reforming zeal: and that too, as we have already seen, would oblige it to do something that no Labour Government has yet managed to do and sustain over any length of time. It would have to say to local business and banking leaders that private capital has not and will not act as the adequate custodian of the long-term interests of the UK's industrial base, or of the concerns and needs of those who work in or depend upon it. It would have to say that if those concerns and needs are to be serviced, responsibility for the specification and pursuit of long-term goals will have to be shifted and reset: shifted initially into a partnership between private capital, the trade union movement and a democratized state; and ultimately reset, through the creation of a genuine industrial democracy. But the problem is that Tony Blair does not give such a radical meaning to the notion of stakeholder capitalism. Even more fundamentally, the trouble is that the Labour Party under Tony Blair does not seem to think in even Tawneyian, let alone in Gramscian terms. It does not seem to think in terms of hegemonic domination and the consolidation of social blocs of support, and it certainly does not think in class terms when charting either its immediate electoral prerequisites or its future governmental allies.

New Labour, New Danger—A Revived New Right

There is a crucial imbalance here, for Labour's conservative opponents certainly do think and act in such terms, and they always have. Of

²² For detail of the Frost interview with Tony Blair on stakeholding, see N. Thompson, 'Supply-side Socialism', p. 38

course, it is slightly easier for Conservative politicians to grasp this vital point about power in a capitalist system. Since they charge themselves primarily with the task of running a dominant system, it is normally quite easy for them to identify with dominant classes. But Labour has always tried to run and to reform the system simultaneously: triggered into reforming it by the impact of the unreformed system on the poor and disadvantaged, but obliged to run the system in a cooperative relationship with the rich and privileged. In consequence, the Party in power has never quite worked out with which bloc of social forces it ought primarily to identify.

I have occasionally drawn on R.H. Tawney's writings from the 1930s in building the argument of this article. That is because the choice of social forces was much starker and more blatant in the 1930s than it is now. Yet even then the Labour Party in power very easily lost its way. Nye Bevan wrote a very telling passage on the politics of Ramsay MacDonald that still has much to say about the constraints (and the choices) facing an incoming Blair administration:

In opposition, the Labour Party is compelled, by the nature of the class struggle, to take up an alignment which hamstrings it when in office. A party climbing to power by articulating the demands of the dispossessed must always wear a predatory visage to the property-owning class although all the time its heart is tender with the promise of peaceful gradualism. It knows that the limited vision of the workers will behold only its outward appearance, but it hopes that the gods of private enterprise will look upon its heart. In either case, one must be deceived. To satisfy the workers the Labour Party must fulfil the threat of its face, and so destroy the political conditions necessary to economic gradualism. To calm the fears of private enterprise it must betray its promise to the workers, and so lose their support.²³

The Blair leadership would do well to ponder that dilemma, to recognize it, and to see its force. They would do well to re-read their Tawney and their Bevan. They like to discount such old-fashioned class analysis, and focus instead on their own modernizing agenda. But if, as writers like Will Hutton have argued, the barriers to economic modernization are intimately related to the barriers to radicalism, then the real problem the Blairites face is that only a high level of *social* radicalism will actually dismantle the barriers to the *economic* modernization which is so vital to their long-term survival in office. Of course, a Blair-led Labour Government might shift a few *political* barriers: it might reform the House of Lords, go for devolution, perhaps settle the Irish question to a degree (though on even this agenda the noises from the Leader's Office these days suggest caution and moderation). In other words, an incoming Blair Government might complete Gladstone's reform programme a century late, if it really applied itself. Yet even that would be simply moving the deck chairs on the Titanic unless that modernization of state structures was quickly accompanied by a challenge to the wider pattern of class power—in economy and society—that both preserve social privilege and undermine economic competitiveness. It is this wider challenge for which the Blairite Labour Party seems to be preparing neither itself nor its supporters.

²³ Cited in M. Foot, *Anthony Bevan*, vol. 1, London 1962, pp. 130–1

Yet if the next Labour Government does not extend itself in that way—if it does not grasp the bigger nettle, as I fear that it will not—then the long term prospects for the Left in the UK are very bleak. For the great danger looming before us as the Tories temporarily implode is that, in the wake of a weak and ineffective Blair government, history will repeat itself. That just as Attlee prepared the way for a Keynesian Conservatism, and Wilson triggered first Selsdon man and then Thatcher woman, so such a Blair Government would pave the way for a revitalized and really unpleasant right-wing Conservatism, would ultimately (and even quite quickly) lay the ground for a John Redwood or a Michael Portillo. Tony Blair is too like a François Mitterrand or a Felipe González for my liking—and where such social-democratic modernizers tread, the collective history of the twentieth century European Left suggests that a rekindled Conservatism inexorably follows.



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New Labour: Old Tory Writ Large?

In the reign of Charles I, the new religious group of the Arminians, enjoying royal favour, appeared to be carrying all before them while people did not yet know what they believed. An aspiring politician asked a clerical friend what the Arminians held, and got the reply: 'all the best bishoprics and deaneries in England'.¹ One suspects that Tony Blair would enjoy that story. His appetite for power led me long ago to think of him as 'Napoleon'—and John Prescott is perfectly cast as Boxer.

It is still extremely hard to know what Blair wants to do with power. The message that he is 'new', however, is ceaselessly reiterated. In order to check this message, it is necessary to begin by taking it at face value, and consider only Labour policy pronouncements since July 1994. Anyone who was ready (as I was) to cooperate with Labour on the strength of their policies before July 1994 must wait to see how far, and with what degree of clarity, they are repeated. Since the bonfire of policies is still burning brightly, it would be unwise to rely on any policy simply because it has not yet been consumed by the flames. Tony Blair must be judged by his own phrases since he became leader.

The only other member of the Labour hierarchy who needs individual consideration is Gordon Brown, and he is not New Labour—he is an all too painfully recognizable type of Old Labour. He is Philip Snowden reincarnated. He is the Labour politician who wants to prove his party's fiscal rectitude by the unrevised and unamended economic criteria of his predecessors.² Since these people have to make more effort to prove their Tory credentials than their Tory opposite numbers, they tend to come out, for practical purposes, to the right of them. It is very hard to see what useful purpose is served by putting them into office.

In Tony Blair's speeches, we find two constantly recurring themes. One is the intense desire for power—not only his party's power in the country, but equally his own power in his party. He says the charge of 'autocracy' is 'ridiculous'. That reminds me of the passage in Helen Waddell's *Abelard*, where St. Bernard exclaims in outrage, 'it is possible that any man can call

¹ Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *Life*, Oxford 1827, vol. 1, p. 56

² *Evening Standard*, Business Day, 10 May 1995. I believe this is the first New Labour repetition of the Thatcherite pledge not to increase public spending as a proportion of GNP.

me proud?' Blair's only substantive reply is: 'have faith'. We have heard that before. His second recurring theme is that he is not going to increase taxes. 'Our programme represents a challenge to those who believe radical politics is defined in terms of tax.'³ This article will take up that challenge.

In any ideological contest, it is essential to explain one's own standpoint. This article is written from a Liberal, not a socialist position. I make no complaint of Tony Blair's abandonment of socialism: the abandonment of Clause Four and of the party's class base were welcome, not unwelcome, to me.⁴ My complaint is that he has thrown out the baby with the bathwater. I do not hear in him the gut hatred of poverty, oppression and injustice which I used to hear and respect in Neil Kinnock. He seems to believe that the alternative to socialism is conservatism, and that is a view which no Liberal can stomach.

The central concern of liberalism is reducing inequalities of power. In that concern, reducing inequalities of income and property is a part, and the reference in our party constitution to the possibility of being 'enslaved by poverty' is not a figure of speech. There are too many cases in which it is sadly real. We are not so utopian as to believe we can abolish inequality of power: not even anarchism, and perhaps least of all anarchism, can achieve that. Our concern, right back to the days when we sponsored our first Bill of Rights in 1689, is to make power accountable, first to the rule of law, and second to a two-way political process.

That means we must begin with the need to control the arbitrary power of the UK executive. In the words of the Scottish Claim of Right, 'we have now reached the point where the Prime Minister has in practice a degree of arbitrary power few, if any English and no Scottish monarchs have rivalled ... Against all this there is in the United Kingdom not a single alternative source of secure constitutional power at any level'.⁵ This has been recently illustrated in the sad story of the attempt to preserve benefits for asylum-seekers, in which the Government was so easily able to push aside the Court of Appeal.

At the same time, we have always understood that it is not only the state which can threaten individual freedom. The power of one individual or corporation over another can be equally threatening. So can the simple lack of opportunity or of physical protection. To take an obvious example, the homeless may have a freedom to vote, but they lack the opportunity to exercise that freedom. In these cases, the role of the state is not to threaten freedom, but to protect it. Whatever contrary myths Margaret Thatcher may have propagated, Liberals have always been aware of the tension between these two types of freedom.⁶ It is the Conservatives who

³ *Independent on Sunday*, 28 July 1996.

⁴ For my views at the time, see the *New Statesman* and the *Guardian*, 24 March 1995. In Labour's rightward drift, this perhaps marked the moment when our parties passed like ships in the night.

⁵ Paragraphs 4.2 and 4.4

⁶ See, for example, Sir Russell Johnston's introduction to the brochure of the Liberal Democrat and Reformers' Group of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg 1996, pp. 4–5. For a fuller statement, see the speech by J. K. Galbraith to the Liberal International Congress, 1987, reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 79–83.

believe in the vision of classical economics: "freedom for ever", said the elephant, as he trampled among the chickens'.

In the creation of opportunity, we have recognized, right back to the Forster Education Act of 1870 and the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms of the Civil Service, that the role of the state is vital. As soon as the attempt is made to provide these services for private profit, room is created for conflict of interest. In education, the market does not necessarily favour the ablest. I can remember when teaching in an American private university, trying to operate an 'aid-blind' system of admission when I knew the candidate's address was Central Park West. Just as the market does not protect the environment without specific regulation, it does not protect safety either. The purposes of a public service and a market are quite different. Without services, a market does not work, as those who try to commute to work in the City know, and those who are unemployed in rural areas learn the hard way. Anyone who looks at the water leaking into the London Underground tunnels will understand that our public services are now under-funded to the point of collapse.

There are few powers more arbitrary than that of any employer in a deregulated labour market, especially while the penalty for 'voluntary unemployment' is so severe. A man once suffered a car breakdown while on the way to work, his employer disbelieved the story and dismissed him, and he lost 40 per cent of his benefit for 'voluntary unemployment'. He presumably then had to sell the car without which he was unemployable. That sort of arbitrary power is very clearly illustrated in the article in NLR 217, 'Paul T— Investigates'. The 'tap on the shoulder' which indicates dismissal *must* be controlled by law.⁷ Liberals believe in free trade unions under the law. In the eighties we felt the need to stress the second half of that statement: it is time we stressed the first. The new John Monks TUC, which uses the courts, both British and European, to protect legal rights, is the sort of organization with which Liberal Democrats can be at ease.

These are some of the touchstones Liberal Democrats will bring to the scrutiny of Tony Blair's policies. As a party, we are exceptionally united on both our philosophy and our policies. Where this article discusses those, it will attempt to express a party view. On the other hand, the question of what another party leader will do cannot be a question of party policy. It is more a betting matter. My policies are my party's, but my bets are my own. When we see, in an election manifesto and a Queen's Speech, what Tony Blair does intend to do, Liberal Democrats will agree well enough.

The Concentration of Power

How does Tony Blair pass these tests? Let us take first the issue of the power of the executive. The Liberal Democrat test as stated by Alan Beith in 1991, is that 'we are the only party willing to come into office committed to reduce our power'.⁸ If Tony Blair wants to reduce his own power, he has concealed his intention remarkably well. The only

⁷ *Asps*, vol. 217, pp. 85–111

⁸ Speech at the Liberal Democrat Party Conference, Bournemouth, 10 September 1991

significant measure to that effect to which he remains committed is the incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights. That is a measure which is very welcome to Liberal Democrats, but it is not an agenda in its own right.

One of the central Liberal Democrat ideas is that power should not be concentrated in one arbitrary, sovereign Parliament which gives the force of law to whatever the Prime Minister wants: it should be shared out, as is normal in many other countries, between overlapping circles of supra-national, national, regional and local seats of power. Labour attitudes to this ideal have gone through a process of repeated advance and retreat, much like a country dance. In 1994, I thought the election of Tony Blair might mark the beginning of another period of advance on this front: now it looks more like one of retreat.

On Europe, no bonfire of Labour policies has yet taken place, but they show ominous signs of smouldering at the edges. The Social Chapter and the single currency are still there, but in *The Road to the Manifesto*, neither is put forward with much enthusiasm. There is more cause for alarm in the general words on Europe: 'our vision of Europe is not that of a federal superstate, but an alliance of independent nations choosing to cooperate with one another to achieve the goals they cannot alone'.⁹ It is not just that the language is taken from Margaret Thatcher's Bruges speech. It is that this leaves out, in the undistributed middle, everything which makes the European Union worthwhile. Of course it is not a federal superstate: not even M. Delors believes that. Nor is it just 'an alliance of independent nations choosing to cooperate'. Not even John Major believes that. Where is the room here for M. Santer's more accurate phrase, 'a community governed by law'? Without some common rules, we cannot have a single market. If Douglas Hurd can say that, why can't Tony Blair? It is because it is a supra-national institution, a community governed by law, that it can be a single market without bankrupting its weaker members. For the same reason it is a vital check on the British executive. The contribution of European law to sexual equality, for example, makes it fair to say that 'Europe is a girl's best friend'. Tony Blair's silence in the 'Beef War' shows he has no idea how much he has to do before Britain recovers any standing in Europe.

At the beginning of June, I would have said that one of the areas where I could be most certain of finding common ground with Tony Blair was devolution. I cannot say that now. The problem is not that Tony Blair wants a referendum. I preferred John Smith's view of the matter, but this is no more than a nuisance. It is more serious that he proposes to give the Scots the option of voting for a Parliament without tax-raising powers. That is a contradiction in terms, and a use of the word 'Parliament' of which Lewis Carroll's Humpty-Dumpty would have been proud. Worst of all, he says: 'the devolution legislation should reflect the fact of (Westminster's) Parliamentary sovereignty. Devolution is after all a strengthening of the United Kingdom because it recognizes the needs and wishes of the different parts of the country'.¹⁰

⁹ The Labour Party, *New Labour: New Life For Britain*, London 1996, p. 35.

¹⁰ Tony Blair, speech in the Playfair Library, Edinburgh University, 28 June 1996, p. 7

In those two short sentences, he committed four howlers. First, he tore up the agreement reached by the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which rested on the vital premise that Scotland is a sovereign nation entitled to be governed by its own consent. This tearing up of a carefully crafted agreement is a warning to anyone who considers working with him. Second, in his casual reference to 'the country', he perpetrates the stock English error that the UK is one country, rather than three countries and a province which have pooled sovereignty by mutual agreement. Third, by this mistake, he fundamentally misunderstands the Act of Union of 1707, which is the title deeds of the present United Kingdom. The Act of Union, like the treaty by which we entered the European Community in 1972, is not an annexation: it is an international treaty. Like other treaties, it can be renegotiated if it ceases to enjoy the consent of one party, as in Scotland it has now done. By this casual misunderstanding of the Act of Union, he turns his devolution bill from a renegotiation of the British partnership into an English annexation of Scotland.¹¹ This is a man who has so little understanding of the principles of political pluralism that he is not safe out.

After this, it is hard to give him the benefit of the very considerable doubt raised by the words on capping in *The Road to the Manifesto*: 'crude council tax capping should go, though as any government must, we will retain reserve powers in extreme cases'.¹² Which way are these words facing? They might come anywhere on the spectrum between our policy and Tory policy. When so much is being unloaded onto Local Authorities, and especially onto social services departments, we need something clearer than this. On major constitutional reform, there is as yet no reason to believe Tony Blair passes the Beith test.

How does he fare on the charge of 'social authoritarianism'? I was not much worried about 'communitarianism' until *The Week at Westminster* engaged me in a discussion with Jack Straw about his curfew proposals. In an unbroadcast portion of the interview, Jack Straw assured me that his proposals could not possibly be authoritarian, since they would not be impositions from above, but empowerments of the local community.¹³ To anyone who has ever belonged to a racial or cultural minority, or has otherwise been a fish out of water in a community, this notion that nothing a community does to its members can be authoritarian is positively breathtaking. I have not heard even John Patten say anything quite so imperious.

¹¹ On the Act of Union of 1707, see, among much else, Brian P. Levack, *The Formation of the British State*, Oxford 1987, pp. 214–25. Professor Levack, being an American, cannot be suspected of writing in favour of any British political group. It must be stressed that what is now proposed by the Scottish Constitutional Convention is not a return to the Union of the Crowns of 1603–1707, but a federal solution half-way between that and the present relationship. In the context of the current debate on English regional government, it is worth pondering Professor Levack's remark (p. 221) that 'successful federations, at least during the last three centuries, have been those that have comprised many political units, an arrangement that prevents the stronger from dominating the weaker'.

¹² *New Labour. New Life For Britain*, p. 29.

¹³ *The Week At Westminster*, 8 June 1996, unedited tape. Though this part of the interview was not, in the event, broadcast, we were being recorded for broadcasting, and therefore literally speaking on the record.

What of more practical matters? Jack Straw tells us that he will repeal 'the worst parts' of the new Asylum Act. I did not know there were any others. Liberal Democrats will repeal the lot. He has not told us which are 'the worst parts'. Clearly, they do not include Clause Seven, which reintroduces the infamous 'sus' laws, and allows the police to arrest anyone on 'suspicion' of being an illegal immigrant. Is it necessary to explain what some police are likely to do with these powers? Yet when I called a division against this clause, Labour neither spoke nor voted. The inevitable left-wing revolt which came into the lobby with me was led by Denis Healey and Michael Cocks. A Labour Party which turns those two into left-wingers must be doing something very strange indeed.¹⁴

With that story in mind, we are entitled to ask questions about the 'system of fast-track punishment' for young offenders put forward in *The Road to the Manifesto*. Is this going to be done by increasing the capacity of the courts, and by better funding of the Crown Prosecution Service? If so, it is a spending commitment, and must be paid for. Is it going to be done, like the Tory shortening of Health Service waiting lists, by making others wait longer? If so, who is going to have to wait, and why should they have to? Is it going to be done by cutting back on judicial safeguards? If so, how are they going to be certain they have caught the right people? One of these three must be true, and the proposal cannot be judged until we know which it is.

Perhaps the most arbitrary of New Labour's proposals is Gordon Brown's compulsory job-or-training scheme for the under twenty-fives. There is nothing wrong with the idea that, in general, people ought not to remain in voluntary idleness. Yet no bureaucratic scheme is infallible, and some people, perhaps many people if the scheme is under-funded, will have good cause for refusing the medicine Gordon Brown thinks good for them. One thinks, among actual Youth Training cases, of the asthmatic who was offered training as a painter, or the young man who wanted to work with animals, and was sent to work in an abattoir. Some, perhaps many, will be undiagnosed cases of mental illness. For all these people, Gordon Brown prescribes a penalty of loss of 40 per cent of their benefits.

Does he have any idea what the loss of 40 per cent of benefits really means? Does he know Elaine Kempson's finding that 'people living on state benefits usually have insufficient income to cover even their basic needs'?¹⁵ That is life on full benefit. Can anyone who proposes to deprive people of 40 per cent of their benefits really claim that he is 'tough on the causes of crime'? Does he know that among unemployed sixteen and seventeen year olds in South Glamorgan, with no right to benefits, the word 'shopping' normally means 'shoplifting'?¹⁶ And does he have a single word to say about restoring benefits to sixteen and seventeen year olds? If he really wants to introduce conscription for the

¹⁴ *House of Lords Official Report*, 2 May 1996, cols 1778–84.

¹⁵ Elaine Kempson, *Life on a Low Income*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York 1996, p. xi and passim.

¹⁶ David Istance, Gareth Rees and Howard Williamson, *Young People Not in Education, Training or Employment in South Glamorgan*, South Glamorgan TEC, Cardiff 1994, p. 81.

under twenty-fives, he would be more honest, as well as less cruel, to back it with a sanction of imprisonment, like the old conscription, instead of loss of benefit. This would be a horrible option, but at least its victims would get food, shelter and hearing, and the *Daily Mail* might be happy for a day.

What of the oppression by the big beasts in the jungle of casual employment? We have the minimum wage, which, along with the European Convention on Human Rights, I would allow as a second good thing in the New Labour programme. Where is the commitment to extend protection against unfair dismissal to people with less than two years' service? That is not the only proposal needed, by a very long way, but it is the one which has rightly come to be treated as symbolic of all the others. What is being done to make women's right not to be dismissed for pregnancy effective? One employer once dismissed a pregnant woman on the ground that it was 'unnatural'. One wonders how he got here. What is being done to ensure proper health and safety inspections in the workplace? All these things are examples of the sort of power no one person should be allowed to have over another. John Monks is working valiantly to do something about it. What is New Labour doing to help him, and why don't we hear more about it?

Taxing and Spending

Yet all this pales into insignificance beside Tony Blair's whipped-spaniel acceptance of the defeat on tax in 1992. Liberal Democrats understand the hurt of that defeat: we felt it too. Yet it is essential to understand the 1992 defeat for what it was: a razor-edge decision taken in the mood of the moment. It was not a defeat for all time. The contrast between the Government's vote of 42 per cent and its satisfaction rating of 29 per cent shows how narrow a margin the decision was taken by. The MORI follow-up survey shows how short a time-scale it was taken in: it was the mood of one weekend. Like Munich, it was the mood of a moment, and like the mood of Munich, it did not last. By September 1992, the voters knew they had made a mistake. And even in 1992, 53 per cent of voters voted for parties which stood for higher taxes. Why does Tony Blair think he is entitled to deny the minority who voted Tory the right to change their minds? And why does he give the Tories the idea, as he has done again over devolution, that as soon as they campaign hard enough against him on any issue, he will back off from it?

One reason why he is wrong is that changing a country's stock of ideas matters as much, and perhaps even more, than changing who holds ministerial office. The current low-tax philosophy is destroying this country, and no government will dare stop it until it has won an election with a mandate to change it. So long as ministers believe they dare not raise taxes, they will let the homeless sleep on the streets and let our schools decay. So long as our ministers follow the proto-anarchist usage of treating the words 'tax and spend' as derogatory,¹⁷ it does not matter what political colours they wear. They cannot begin the process of recovery. To tax and spend has been the basic function of government ever since King

¹⁷ For a very clear example, see *New Labour: New Life For Britain*, p. 12

Alfred began the defence budget. Tony Blair, in using it as a term of abuse, pretends to be a pacifist as well as an anarchist.

Paddy Ashdown, by whom I would like to be governed, said in his party conference speech last autumn that 'taxes are the subscription charge we pay to live in a civilized society'. For good measure, he added that 'if you promise never to put up taxes, then the rest of your pledges are no more than pipedreams'.¹⁸ Tony Blair, in his Birmingham speech the very next day, *did* promise not to put up taxes.¹⁹ If I cannot have Paddy Ashdown in Number 10, why should I prefer Tony Blair with a low-tax philosophy to Kenneth Clarke without one?

Tony Blair, in his *Independent on Sunday* article of 28 July, advances a serious argument against this approach. He said that arguing for more tax 'has allowed the Tories to portray themselves as hard but competent. In fact they have been totally incompetent managers of the economy. . . But as long as we were saying tax, spend and borrow more, such an argument was lost'.²⁰ It is a serious argument, but it is mistaken. He is correct in his premise about the Tories' incompetent management of the economy. Where he is wrong is that in abandoning the case for taxation, he deprives himself of the chance to explain the Tories' incompetent management, and their need to increase taxes, which is the consequence of their low-tax philosophy. The Tories are like a householder who tries to economize by not mending the hole in the roof, and then never counts the building bills incurred as a result.

The central fallacy of monetarist economics, both in the UK and in the US, was that they believed they could use increased unemployment as a tool for economic management, but forgot to count the cost of that unemployment, in Social Security, in falling demand and in falling revenues. Now, in the watered-down version of late Thatcherism, they are trying to do the same thing with under-employment. They have more and more people on short-term contracts, in part-time jobs and on low wages, and then they cannot understand why the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement is growing because Government revenues are falling below their projected levels. This really is an example of what J.S. Mill called 'the inability of the unanalytic mind to recognize its own handiwork'. The UN Human Development Report has found that inequality has increased faster in Britain than in any other country save Australia, run by Tony Blair's hero Paul Keating.²¹ Gary Craig has found that in the 1980s the proportion in the UK below half average income was growing faster than in any other EU country, and is now the highest proportion in any EU country except Portugal.²²

Such changes lead to falls in both demand and revenue. It is these falls, in turn, which produce the spending cuts which lead to under-investment, whether in the transport of goods to Europe or in research on BSE. It is

¹⁸ Paddy Ashdown, speech at Liberal Democrat Party Conference, 19 September 1995.

¹⁹ *Independent and Financial Times*, 21 September 1995.

²⁰ *Independent on Sunday*, 28 July 1996

²¹ *Independent on Sunday*, 21 July 1996

²² Gary Craig, *The Privatization of Human Misery*, Inaugural Lecture, University of Humber, 5 December 1995.

very like the old vicious cycle of London Transport: fare rises meant fewer passengers, which meant fare rises, which meant fewer passengers. The costs are dumped on the Department of Social Security. When Tony Blair says 'the welfare state is not working in its present form', he is indulging in the old Tory sport of shooting the messenger.²³ Present levels of unemployment and of under-employment are putting loads on the welfare state it was never meant to carry. Beveridge said it would not work much above 5 per cent unemployment. If that is true, it is the unemployment, not the welfare state, which must be changed. The welfare state can be changed, to avoid poverty traps and make it easier for people to get back to work. This is one thing he and I agree about, but I can tell him it is not a cost-free option. It cannot be done by a party afraid of spending commitments.

Now that the buck has been passed to the welfare state, Peter Lilley is trying to pass it on further. He is trying to disentitle people to benefits, and calculating the whole of the benefit saved as a gross saving. It never occurs to him that disentitling people to benefit may have concealed costs, because the Department of Social Security has never done any research on what happens to those disentitled to benefit. Do they become ill, and fall onto the demand-led budget of the NHS? Do they, through homelessness, fall onto a variety of small programmes run by the Department of the Environment or Local Authority Housing or Social Service departments? Do they die, and have funerals at the cost of the Social Fund? Does Gordon Brown, putting forward his new disentitlement proposals for the under twenty-fives, know any more of the answers than the DSS does? We will never start recovery until we can understand that spending a little money may be the best way to save some.

We are now getting hints that New Labour may go further, and adopt the Clinton welfare reforms, under which people could be totally disentitled to benefit.²⁴ It is true that those who accept benefits have a moral obligation to look for work. If benefits are above subsistence level, the state may enforce this through a benefit penalty. What is never defensible is the use of state power to force people below subsistence level. This is either manslaughter or incitement to crime, and either is a gross abuse of power. If a Blair government were to do this, it would be worse than the Tories.

Paddy Ashdown, in his last conference speech, pointed out that it is illogical to pay people not to work while people will not use the local railway station at night because it is unmanned and unsafe. That point needs repeating over and over again. It leads onto the conclusion, which others are now reaching, that the whole notion of 'downsizing' was never a real economy. Tony Blair might reply that he is constrained by 'the global market'. It is quite true that the global market is here to stay. Yet even the global market can be regulated, and it is in that direction that much of the effort of the next government should be directed. GATT's concept of 'social dumping', to take one example, raises an infinite number of problems, but should not for that reason be abandoned. The global

²³ *Independent on Sunday*, 28 July 1996

²⁴ *Independent on Sunday*, 11 August 1996

market, moreover, is not a proper market. There is free movement of capital and free movement of jobs, but there is not free movement of labour. Anyone who has heard Anne Widdecombe pronounce the words 'economic migrant' knows that she does not believe in the free market.²⁵ So long as there is this imbalance, the global market is tilted against labour. Sooner or later, the great powers of G7 may realize that unless something is done to redress this imbalance, the result will be a major world recession. Denis Healey is thinking constructively on these issues, but is Tony Blair?²⁶

None of this can be put right without a little pump-priming, and the start-up costs cannot be met without some increase in taxation, and cannot be raised until the low-tax philosophy has been seen to be defeated. If Tony Blair does not administer that defeat, he will find that, just like John Major, he is in office but not in power.

It cannot be done by recycling old money. The proposal to redistribute Child Benefit for the over-sixteens is a proposal to starve Peter to teach Paul. The windfall tax is supposed to finance a long-term reduction in class sizes and a massive training programme from a one-off source of revenue. The windfall tax is not a free tax. If it is true, as I believe it is, that the privatized utilities have been making massive profits through rip-offs, these have been at someone else's expense. Either they have been at the expense of the consumer, or they have been at the expense of investment. The windfall tax will not give the money back to the consumer: there will be no fewer water disconnections. It will not put the money into investment: there will be no less sewage on the beaches, and no less pollution in the drinking water. There is no such thing as a free tax cut, and there is no free windfall either.

Labour's pledge to reduce class sizes would be good if it could be delivered, but it rests on no foundations save the windfall tax. It is hard to see how a one-off windfall tax can finance a continuing spending commitment—unless Tony Blair believes the utilities will continue to rip off the consumer under his government. Beyond that, Labour education policy rests on the old Conservative myth that it is possible to 'improve education' without spending any money. This idea fundamentally misjudges the power of government. Governments do not improve education: teachers do. If teachers do not do the job, only other teachers can put them right. Governments cannot decide how to teach reading: they can only pay for books—short of that, they can do nothing. If they stopped there, it might not be so bad, but their whole mechanism of targets, testing and sacking is a device to shift the blame for their own failure to do what is needed. The same is true of Labour policy for student support. Labour have made much capital out of student poverty, but never, even under Kinnock, have they been prepared to put up the money to make it

²⁵ *House of Lords Official Report*, 15 May 1996, WA 62. In answer to a Question about the effects of withdrawal of benefits under the Habitual Residence Test, Lord Mackay of Ardbrecknish said: 'it is not the Government's practice to monitor the effects of failure to qualify for Social Security benefits.' See also *ibid.* 23 November 1995, cols 413–6, 28 March 1996, WA 149 and many other references.

²⁶ See Denis Healey's essay in Giles Radice, ed, *What Needs to Change*, London 1996, pp. 96–110.

possible for anyone to afford to be a 'full-time student'. Unless the level of student support is raised by at least £1,000 a year, only the children of the rich will be able to afford a full-time education: Liberal Democrats find this unacceptable but there is no sign that New Labour will do anything about it.

If Tony Blair does not challenge the low-tax philosophy, he leaves the Tories in office by proxy. He concedes victory in the biggest debate of all. For myself, I do not much care whether the Tories are in office in person or by proxy. For Tony Blair, I would have thought that having them in office by proxy might be the worst of both worlds. He and Gordon Brown have a long way to go and, for the time being, our judgements must be interim ones. For the meantime, I must say of them what Marcel Proust said to the old lady who asked whether he believed in ghosts: 'Madame, their appearances are against them.'

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Information as Gift and Commodity

'The current phase of capitalist development', says Gareth Locksley, 'is one characterized by the elevation of information and its associated technology into the first division of key resources and commodities. Information is a new form of capital',¹ and as such it undergoes a change of form: rather than being deposited primarily in an interlocking ensemble of open 'library' systems with minimal entry requirements, it is increasingly managed within a system of private ownership where access is regulated by the payment of rent.² One point at which it is possible to see this change crystallizing is in the protocols relating to intellectual property in the recently concluded GATT round.³

An unlikely embodiment of the world-historical spirit, the GATT treaty nevertheless marks a clear historical demarcation in the global control of information. I shall argue that it imposes a definition of intellectual-property rights directly disadvantageous to Third World countries which, holding few patents themselves, have been brought within the scope of a regime where they will be held strictly accountable for their state of exponentially increasing indebtedness.⁴ One commentator—no less convinced of the righteousness of the cause of Western property rights than the majority of Western analysts—sets up the narrative of conflicting interests between the developed countries and the Lesser Developed Countries (LDCs) in the following way:

Many LDCs have a different philosophy about the protection of intellectual property. There are some politicians and economists who assert that intellectual property protection laws simply perpetuate a system of economic imperialism which allows countries such as the United States to maintain a position of world dominance. These dissenters believe that ideas should flow freely as part of [the] common heritage of mankind. Brazil does not give

¹ Gareth Locksley, 'Information Technology and Capitalist Development', *Capital and Class*, no. 27, Winter 1986, p. 91.

² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

³ The Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was concluded on 15 December 1993 and ratified by over 120 countries in Marrakesh on 12 April 1994.

⁴ Braga cites a number of analysts who have argued that 'the ultimate goal of the industrialized countries [in the GATT negotiations] would be to freeze the existing international division of labour by way of the control of technology transfers to the Third World'. Carlos Alberto Primo Braga, 'The Economics of Intellectual Property Rights and the GATT: A View from the South', in Connie T. Brown and Eric A. Szewda, eds, *Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property*, Nashville 1990, p. 252.

drugs any patent protection within its borders because the government does not believe its people should have to pay what is to them a very high price, for a basic health care commodity. Argentina takes a similar position on pharmaceuticals. One can sympathize with the plight of LDCs in their effort to make products affordable for their citizens whose per capita income is significantly lower than that of the developed countries. But an argument which does not allow for an adequate return on investment in research and development is ultimately short-sighted. Mexico is an example of a country which threatened to force pharmaceutical companies to hand over production of their drugs to local firms and accept significantly reduced royalties. But the drug companies countered with a threat to abandon the Mexican market entirely, and the government backed down. As a result of the threat, American drug firms are still leery of exposing too much of their technology in Mexico.⁵

What begins here as an argument about the ethics and the long-term inefficiencies of refusing to accept the advanced world's definition of appropriate patent rights becomes, by the end of this passage, an object lesson in realpolitik: Mexico's 'short-sightedness' has nothing to do with the morality of its philosophical position, and everything to do with its miscalculation of the power of international drug companies. This shift is characteristic, I think, of the logic within which the argument has been conducted.

Much of the commentary on the GATT round is cast in terms of calculations of the losses incurred by the Western information industries as a result of 'piracy' and 'theft';⁶ but these calculations rarely attempt to get to grips with the conflict of definitions of what should count as 'property' in the first place—should patents run for five years or for twenty? Should pharmaceutical products be subject to special conditions such as local licensing? Their bland assurances that subscription to an international intellectual-property regime will in the long term bring about technology transfer and thus a decreased dependency of the 'developing' on the 'developed' nations⁷ ring hollow in the light of the way the GATT regime has 'neatly and disturbingly divided developed countries, who are major net exporters of intellectual-property rights, from the LDCs which are net importers'.⁸ There is no 'accumulation of knowledge capital' when access to that capital is carefully controlled by monopoly rents

⁵ Kurt Stanberry, 'Piracy of Intellectual Property', *Security*, September–October 1990, p. 36

⁶ Hoffman and Marcou cite an estimate by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment that world trade in intellectual property affects 'more than 2.2 per cent of the US labour force and 5 per cent of our gross national product' (Gary M. Hoffman and George T. Marcou, 'The Costs and Complications of Piracy', *Security*, September–October 1990, p. 25), another study cites an International Trade Commission Report's conclusion that 'United States firms lose an estimated \$43 to \$61 billion annually from foreign piracy' (Mark Modak-Truman, 'Section 337 and GATT in the *Alcoa* Controversy: A Pre- and Post-Omnibus Trade Competitiveness Act Analysis', *Intellectual Property Law Review*, 1990, p. 189), although other commentators tend to be somewhat more conservative in their estimates

⁷ Hoffman and Marcou, 'Costs and Complications', p. 28: 'Failure to invest in "knowledge capital" fosters the same kind of dependency on the outside world as failure to accumulate other forms of productive capital'.

⁸ M. M. Kosteki, 'Sharing Intellectual Property Between the Rich and the Poor', *European Intellectual Property Review* (EIPR), vol. 13, no. 8 (1991), p. 273

A New World Information Order

One of the main objectives of the Uruguay Round of the GATT was the extension of patent enforcement to certain key industries such as pharmaceuticals and agrochemicals which in many countries were exempt from patent protection.⁹ These are industries whose products—medicine and food—embody in a particularly direct manner the issue of a conflict between 'social' and 'private' interests. Indira Gandhi put the *différend* starkly when she told the World Health Assembly in 1982: 'The idea of a better-ordered world is one in which medical discoveries will be free of patents and there will be no profiteering from life and death'.¹⁰ Now, such an argument is vulnerable to attack within a framework in which research and development are primarily funded by private, profit-oriented investment. In such a context, the argument mistakes a commodity for a gift, and the consequences of this mistake are ethically dubious. But this is of course by no means the only thinkable framework. If knowledge and the information component of its products are conceived as public rather than private goods, then there are at least two possible alternatives: the direct sponsorship of knowledge production by government, for public use and by means of a subsidy from the taxation system; or public subsidy for the private production of knowledge, again for public use. Historically, as Carlos Braga argues, these alternative frameworks have been propounded in international forums¹¹ by Third World bureaucracies, whose attitudes 'reflect the predominance of a *scientific ethos* which has at its basis the norm of complete disclosure. This "culture" ... is hostile to the view of knowledge as a *private capital good* that is the foundation of the so-called mature intellectual-property systems of the industrialized economies'.¹²

It is perhaps in this broad sense, and with a full recognition that this gift is in no way 'free', since it must be subsidized by the state, that the opposition between gift and commodity may become clearer. The condition for this move, however, is the 'norm of complete disclosure' which was the historical condition of possibility for scientific thought to break with a culture and a politics of the secret,¹³ and which retains its power as a challenge to the increasingly pervasive ethos of private appropriation and control both of scientific and of 'cultural' knowledges.

⁹ See Carlos Correa, 'The GATT Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights: New Standards for Patent Protection', *SUPA*, vol. 16, no. 8 (1994), p. 327.

¹⁰ Cited in Braga, 'The Economics of Intellectual Property Rights', p. 253.

¹¹ Which have themselves been split between those with a 'trade' orientation (the GATT, the IMF, the World Bank) and those with a 'development' orientation (the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Culture Organization). See Bruce Lindsay, 'GATT: Development and Intellectual Property', *Arms Journal*, no. 3, 1994, p. 36.

¹² Braga, 'The Economics of Intellectual Property Rights', p. 263.

¹³ But the gift may of course be just as closely aligned with the secret and the sacred as with disclosure; Mauss's essay on the gift (*The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Gunnison, New York 1967) constantly returns to this conjuncture, and it is the focus as well of much of Derrida's recent work, in particular *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills, Chicago 1995. Conversely, even the most irreproachably open of scientific practices may lend itself to unjust uses.

The Ownership of Nature

The norm of disclosure is of course a component of patent law, which requires a full and publicly available description of the 'invention' as the price for allowing its private appropriation for a limited term.¹⁴ The requirement is one of those mechanisms by which Western intellectual-property regimes seek to balance a component of information that resides permanently in the public domain (the 'idea' or 'method' in copyright law; the 'primary' meanings of language in trademark law; reproducible scientific inventions in patent law) and a component which is temporarily withdrawn from it (the 'expression' in copyright law, 'secondary' meanings in trademark law—at least until these become so much a part of the language as to return to their 'primary' status; and monopoly rights of exploitation of inventions for the life of the patent).¹⁵ Patent law, to simplify drastically, is a way of locking up commercially valuable information, under rather strict conditions, for exclusive use for a limited term. I turn now to an exploration of a series of recent developments which have extended the possibility of locking up aspects of 'nature' itself.

Nature, like language, has traditionally been classified as a *res communis* which can have no human author.¹⁶ Just as I cannot lay claim to exclusive ownership of the basic materials of the English language, so I cannot patent a natural species or a particular use of a substance found in nature. Natural products like the cellulose surrounding the external fibres of coconuts cannot be patented because they exist independently of human-kind; neither can the discovery of new properties of natural or patented objects (such as the recently discovered efficacy of aspirin in controlling heart disease), since these properties are contained in the structure of matter itself, and 'neither the structure of nature nor the effects which flow from it are subject to patent'.¹⁷ Patent applies to *inventions* of industrial processes, but not to *discoveries* of the natural laws on which they are based.

The revolution in biotechnology of the last twenty years has, however, brought great pressure to bear on the way in which that line between invention and discovery has been drawn. Greenfield notes that the trend in contemporary law 'is to allow patents for "products of nature" so long

¹⁴ The 'letters patent' granting rights of exclusion in an invention which they simultaneously describe are by definition instruments of publicity—as opposed to the 'letters close' or *lettres de cachet* which fold their message within the sealed parchment, patent law requires a surrender of *secrecy* in exchange for the right to exploit the invention, and like all intellectual property it carries no exclusive rights in abstract ideas—only in the 'concrete, tangible, or physical embodiment of an abstraction' Peter D. Rosenberg, *Patent Law Fundamentals*, vol. 1, second ed., New York 1995, §1.01, §1.03.

¹⁵ My examples are all taken from US law, which is in many respects the most fully developed body of doctrine relating to intellectual-property law. With the signing of the Berne Convention in 1988, US copyright law is now broadly in line with most other Western legal systems, although the integration of moral rights law has been more taken for granted than actually implemented in appropriate legislation.

¹⁶ See Bernard Edelman, 'The Law's Eye: Nature and Copyright', in Brad Sherman and Alain Strowel, eds., *Of Authors and Origins*, Oxford 1994, p. 79.

¹⁷ Bernard Edelman, 'Vers une approche juridique du vivant', in Edelman and Marie-Angèle Hermitte, eds., *L'Homme, la nature et le droit*, Paris 1988, pp. 28–9, my translation.

as the inventor has changed the product to conform to the utility, novelty, and non-obviousness requirements of the patent statute'.¹⁸ Correa elaborates:

In countries that are members of the European Patent Convention, a patent can be granted when a substance found in nature can be characterized by its structure, by its process of obtention or by other criteria, if it is new in the sense that it was not previously available to the public. In the United States an isolated and purified form of a natural product can be patented if it is found in nature only in an unpurified form. As a result, a very thin line separates 'invention' from 'discovery' in those countries.¹⁹

This is to say that patent law has been shifting towards a more expansive definition of its proper subject matter, and in particular towards a rather different understanding of that 'common' realm of 'nature'.

For Bernard Edelman, the move from a strict prohibition on the patenting of nature towards a range of recent decisions allowing the patenting of living matter is made possible by a fundamental split in the way Western modernity has defined nature itself. The distinction between industrial processes (which are invented) and the natural laws on which they are based (which are discovered) works to exclude from patentability whatever is independent of human intervention. Thus the model of nature that operates in Western legal systems is one that is defined with respect to human activity. The natural realm appears here not only as an object of knowledge but as a domain with its own finality distinct from and irreducible to human ends. The underlying distinction is therefore between 'human activity, which modifies the laws of nature and gives them a different meaning, and nature itself which is limited to responding to its own programme [*qui se borne à répondre à son programme*]'.²⁰

Artificial Nature

What this distinction makes possible, however, is a further demarcation between 'natural' and 'artificial' forms of 'nature'. Edelman traces the evolution of this opposition through two key moments in US legislation. The first is the 1930 *Plant Act*, which distinguished between 'products of nature' and 'human-made inventions'—the latter including 'invented' plant varieties. The effect of this distinction is that the category of life [*le vivant*] is split in such a way that the solidarity of the human species with other living things is lost; the human, expelled from the domain of nature, then becomes a rival to it, producing fabricated simulacra such as hybrid plant varieties which count as 'inventions'. The 1970 *Plant Variety Protection Act* further extended the category of an 'artificial' nature which, being humanly authored, is potentially patentable, to the *reproducibility* of plants (rather than merely single exemplars); private rights could now be held in the infinite genetic chain that is the essence of liv-

¹⁸ Michael S. Greenfield, 'Recombinant DNA Technology: A Science Struggling with the Patent Law', *Intellectual Property Law Review*, 1993, p. 151.

¹⁹ Correa, 'The GATT Agreement', p. 155. The key case in which the concept of purification is determined is *In re Bergstrom*, 427 F.2d 1394, 166 USPQ 256 (CCPA 1970), see also Robert A. Armitage, 'The Emerging US Patent Law for the Protection of Biotechnology Research Results', *EPR*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1989), pp. 47–57.

²⁰ Edelman, 'Vers une approche juridique du vivant', p. 31.

ing matter. To these two moments, Edelman adds the further step that is taken in the 1980 *Chakrabarty* case²¹ which determined that genetically engineered organisms are either a 'manufacture' or a 'composition of matter' and are therefore patentable. From single-celled organisms the line then passes through genetically engineered plants²² to oysters²³ to transgenic animals—the Harvard mouse, bred specifically for its susceptibility to cancer.²⁴ The end result of this process, he argues, is an instrumental, ultimately even an industrial conception of living matter which subordinates it to the commodity form. Edelman summarizes the stages of this historical passage as follows:

Life has been integrated into the market as easily as could be imagined because it has been a progressive process. It started with something that was symbolically far removed from mankind, the vegetable domain; from there it passed to the micro-organism, then to the most rudimentary forms of animal life like the oyster. The whole of the animal kingdom is now targeted and we are on the verge of the human, weighed down with precedents which ensure the closure of the system and make any resistance difficult. The work of man, which must be remunerated, claims repayment from the whole realm of nature which has traditionally been free of any property claims.²⁵

The most spectacular theatre of patent law is currently the human genetic system itself, together with the recombinant engineering of drugs and human tissues. In 1991 the United States National Institute of Health (NIH) announced a programme of patent applications on human gene fragments; early in 1992 they announced a further application on 2,375 fragments representing 5 per cent of all human genes.²⁶ Control of these fragments—or 'express sequence tags'—would effectively block any use of the corresponding full gene, even if the identity of these genes were unknown. At first sight, this move looks like an inappropriate privatization of material which ought to be openly available for scientific research. A story in the *New York Times* quotes James Watson, then the head of the Human Genome Project, as saying that 'it would be a total mess for industry... if someone has been working on a particular gene for several years, but somebody else has patented it before they even know what they have'; the consequence of such a pre-emptive patent would be that 'companies that uncovered the role of a particular gene could be forced to pay royalties to those that had merely isolated it'.²⁷ The *Times*' perspective is purely industrial, of course, and does not really raise the question of the private ownership of the genetic commons. There is also another way of reading this story.

²¹ *Diamond v. Chakrabarty*, 206 USPQ 193, 447 US 303 (1980).

²² *Ex parte Hibberd* (227 USPQ 443 [PTO Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences, 1985]).

²³ *Ex parte Allen* (2 USPQ 2d 1425 [PTO Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences, 1987]).

²⁴ US Patent 7 735 866.

²⁵ Bernard Edelman, 'Entre personne humaine et matériau humain: le sujet de droit', in Edelman and Hermitte, *L'Homme, la nature et le droit*, p. 142. Edelman's description of this process as one of desecralization of the human, however, reveals the weakness of the normative basis of any critique that takes 'the human' or 'the person' as an inviolable given.

²⁶ Greenfield, 'Recombinant DNA Technology', p. 174. Wilkie notes that 'the issue was made more piquant by the fact that the sequences being patented are of genes expressed in the brain, so not only would the US Government own part of the human genome, it would also have succeeded in patenting part of the human brain'. Tom Wilkie, *Perilous Knowledge: The Human Genome Project and its Implications*, London 1994, p. 93.

²⁷ *New York Times*, 21 October 1991, p. 12.

Richard Lewontin says flatly that 'No prominent molecular biologist of my acquaintance is without a financial stake in the biotechnology business',²⁸ and the Director of the NIH has said that she 'wants the NIH to patent the human genome to prevent private entrepreneurs, and especially foreign capital, from controlling what has been created with American public funding'.²⁹ Patent rights would here be working in *defence* of the public domain—or at least that part of it that resides in the United States.

What is clear, in any case, is the extent of the profits at stake. 'If human DNA sequences are to be the basis of future therapy', writes Lewontin, 'then the exclusive ownership of such DNA sequences would be money in the bank'.³⁰ Certainly this expectation of profit, which 'discourages open discussion of technical detail during the crucial R&D phase before patent filing',³¹ has undermined that culture of shared information which the patent system supposedly fosters. Part of the problem with assessing these developments, however, is their sheer recentness, and, to develop a clearer perspective on the parenting of living matter, I want to turn now to the longer and more fully constructed history of the private appropriation of plant varieties.

The Commodification of Plants

The particular clarity provided by this history consists in its ability to relate changes in the legal and technological frameworks of development of plant varieties to changes in farming as a global industry and a way of life. My major source here is Jack Kloppenburg's *First the Seed*, which argues that farming in the United States, as elsewhere in the advanced capitalist world, has been transformed over the last century 'from a largely self-sufficient production process into one in which purchased inputs account for the bulk of the resources employed'.³² No longer do farmers produce most of their own means of production—such as seed, feed, fuel and motive power. For the most part, these have moved 'off-farm and into circumstances in which fully developed capitalist relations of production can be developed'.³³

²⁸ Richard Lewontin, 'The Dream of the Human Genome', *New York Review of Books*, 28 May 1992, p. 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁰ *Ibid.* Greenfield quotes estimates that US sales of biotechnologically-derived products will reach \$40 billion in the year 2000, with worldwide sales of \$100 billion ('Recombinant DNA Technology', p. 35). The trade in genetically produced body tissue was estimated to be worth \$2.2 billion in 1990 (Sean Johnston, 'Patent Protection for the Protein Products of Recombinant DNA', *Intellectual Property Law Review*, 1991, p. 190), and, as long ago as September 1988, there were between 15,000 and 16,000 biotechnology-related patents pending in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

³¹ Daniel J. Kevles and Leroy Hood, 'Reflections', in Daniel J. Kevles and Leroy Hood, eds, *The Code of Codes. Scientific and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project*, Cambridge, Mass. 1992, p. 312.

³² Jack Kloppenburg, Jr., *First the Seed: The Political Economy of Plant Biotechnology, 1492–2000*, Cambridge 1988, p. 10. Kloppenburg quotes Richard Lewontin to this effect ('Agricultural Research and the Penetration of Capital', *Science for the People*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1982), p. 13): 'Farming has changed from a productive process that originated most of its own inputs and converted them into outputs, to a process that passes materials and energy through from an external supplier to an external buyer'.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

A crucial factor in this process has been the transformation of seed from an infinitely reproducible public good to a scarce commodity, and at the heart of this radical transformation lay the development, through systematic scientific breeding, of hybrid plant varieties. The socio-economic logic of hybridization is this: unlike open-pollinated varieties, seed from hybrid grain varieties produces a diminished yield when it is saved and replanted. Hybridization thus 'uncouples seed as "seed" from seed as "grain" and thereby facilitates the transformation of seed from a use-value to an exchange-value. The farmer choosing to use hybrid varieties must purchase a fresh supply of seed each year', with the result that seed-corn 'now accounts for about half of the \$6.4 billion in annual seed sales generated by American companies'.³⁴

If the use of scientific breeding methods and, especially in recent years, of recombinant technologies has made seed more amenable to commodification, this process has equally been facilitated by the extension of exclusive property rights in plant germplasm in the two major pieces of US legislation this century—the 1930 *Plant Act* and the 1970 *Plant Variety Protection Act*. Critics of the latter have argued that it 'enhances economic concentration in the seed industry, facilitates non-competitive pricing, contains the free exchange of germplasm, contributes to genetic erosion and uniformity, and encourages the de-emphasis of public breeding'.³⁵ Certainly one of the major effects of the combination of new breeding technologies with extended property rights has been a complete restructuring of the industry. Public research has ceased to be the major source of new plant varieties and, in being relegated to 'basic' and thus non-profitable activities, it has ceased to exercise a disciplinary effect on commercial breeders. The traditional seed companies have largely been taken over by transnational petrochemical and pharmaceutical companies like ICI, BP, Shell, Upjohn, Ciba-Geigy, Monsanto, and Sandoz.³⁶ Profit in this sector is not based simply on sales of seed, but rather on the symbiosis between crops and chemicals, since most strains are now bred for their compatibility with—and thus their dependence on—chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

But the goal of bringing 'all farmers and all crops into the seed-market every year'³⁷ has not been restricted to domestic markets—transnationals have global strategies. Jeremy Seabrook sees the new agricultural biotechnologies as in part an exacerbation of 'the damaging technologies of the Green Revolution—the loss of the soil's productive capacity, the forfeit of genetic diversity, the spread of monocultures and the dependency of farmers on increasingly expensive inputs'. With its capital-intensive reliance on high-bred and high-yielding grain varieties and on

³⁴ Ibid, p. 93

³⁵ Ibid, p. 131

³⁶ Christie cites estimates that these companies spent around \$10 billion during the 1980s on buying up seed companies or entering into joint ventures with them, and the ten biggest seed companies were reputed to have sales of more than \$2.5 billion in 1987. Andrew Christie, 'Patents for Plant Innovation', *EIPR*, vol. 11, no. 11 (1989), p. 394, the figures cited are from *The Economist*, 15 August 1987, p. 56.

³⁷ Kloppenborg, *First the Seed*, p. 265

massive chemical inputs,³⁸ the Green Revolution was a product of the same logic of commodification that has so dramatically restructured agriculture in the developed world. At the same time, the relation between First and Third World agricultures is asymmetrical. Apart from Japan, the regions of greatest biotic diversity (the so-called 'Havilov centres') are concentrated in the tropical and sub-tropical countries of the Third World, and—in Kloppenburg's summary of a complex argument—'the development of the advanced capitalist nations has been predicated on transfers of plant germplasm from the periphery'.³⁹ This is not in itself the problem, however; what is, is that the new global reach of the legal regimes governing plant varieties has made it possible for Third World plant varieties, in some cases the result of millennia of breeding; to become, with minor genetic modifications, the property of financially powerful corporations, which can then exact royalties for their use in their countries of origin.⁴⁰ Pat Mooney cites the isolation and patenting of a gene from the West African cowpea, which conferred resistance to pests: the African farmers who developed the peas to have this resistance were left without legal entitlement.⁴¹ A similar appropriation occurred with the Indian neem tree, seeds from which are used by farming communities as an insecticide; Western scientists, drawing on traditional knowledge and local practices, extracted compounds from the tree which are now patented and marketed worldwide.⁴²

The asymmetry of such transactions lies in the exchange of a gift against a non-gift:

The germplasm resources of the Third World have historically been considered a free good—the 'common heritage of mankind'... Germplasm ultimately contributing billions of dollars to the economies of the core nations has been appropriated at little cost from—and with no direct remuneration to—the periphery. On the other hand, as the seed industry of the advanced industrial nations has matured, it has reached out for global markets. Plant varieties incorporating genetic material originally obtained from the Third World now appear there not as free goods but as commodities.⁴³

What is involved in these transactions is in part the relation between traditional forms of peasant knowledge which have gone into the development of diverse land races over many generations, and 'expert' knowledge which has assumed the right to appropriate its products to itself: the right to rent out resources of knowledge without itself paying rent either on the biological resources or the knowledge-capital it has acquired 'for free'.

³⁸ Jeremy Seabrook, 'Biotechnology and Genetic Diversity', *Race and Class*, vol. 34, no. 3 (1993), p. 16.

³⁹ Kloppenburg, *First the Seed*, p. 49.

⁴⁰ And which can thereby reinforce the competitive advantage of the agriculture of the developed nations. At the beginning of the Uruguay Round of GATT the then US Agriculture Secretary, John Block, said: 'The idea that developing countries should feed themselves is an anachronism from a bygone era. They could better ensure their food security by relying on US agricultural products, which are available, in most cases, at lower cost'. Cited in Kevin Watkins, 'GATT and the Third World. Fixing the Rules', *Race and Class*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1992), p. 34.

⁴¹ Pat Mooney, 'John Moore's Body', *New Internationalist*, March 1991, p. 8.

⁴² Cameron Forbes, 'Intellectual Rights Pose Big Threat to Third World', *The Weekend Australian*, 23 October 1993, citing the Malaysian lawyer Gurdial Singh Nijar.

⁴³ Kloppenburg, *First the Seed*, p. 15.

Commodity and Gift

The issue is one of subsidy. The genetic uniformity that has resulted from hybridization and crop-standardization has left First-World agriculture heavily dependent on importations from the Third World as a source of genetic variation. Yet this flow, which has enriched the corporate producers of hybrid varieties, has been almost entirely free of charge, since the model of knowledge as private intellectual property works to the disadvantage of the 'almost invisible, informal and collective innovation' characteristic of peasant communities.⁴⁴ Patent law, which has no hold on 'products of nature', favours innovations deriving from high-tech research rather than innovation by long-term breeding for genetic variety.⁴⁵ And, as James Boyle points out, the implicit metaphor of authorship plays a strongly determinant role in structuring the pattern of distribution: 'The chemical companies' scientists fit the paradigm of authorship. The [Third World] farmers are everything that authors should not be: their contribution comes from a community rather than an individual, tradition rather than an innovation, evolution rather than transformation. Guess who gets the intellectual property right?'⁴⁶

My interest here is in the way that this asymmetry is organized by the interplay of 'gift' and 'commodity' relations. What emerges from it is not a simple argument for a return to a gift economy, since one way of answering the question of justice for the world's poorer nations would be in terms of the exaction of a fair rent for the use of their resources. Yet what is striking is the recurrent lack of commensurability between a gift relation on one side and a commodity relation on the other. Often there is an open contradiction in the arguments made on behalf of the current market order, with a demand that 'elite' commercial germplasm be a privately owned and exploited commodity, but that 'primitive' germplasm be treated as a public good—a commons open to use by all.⁴⁷ Yet the case for an essential difference between the two is difficult to sustain. In particular, it cannot be made through an opposition of elaborated to unelaborated varieties, since the land races are not wild: they are the result of centuries and sometimes millennia of selection.

Some plant breeders in the developed world have argued that the 'mining' of Third World plant germplasm results in no loss of the resource, since only minute samples are physically taken. But what is taken is never simply the tangible biological matter, but rather the genetic coding it contains. This argument goes to the heart of the question of information as property. Information is in principle infinitely transferable

⁴⁴ Carlos Correa, 'Biological Resources and Intellectual Property Rights', *EIPR*, vol. 14, no. 5 (1992), p. 154.

⁴⁵ See Pat Mooney, 'The Massacre of Apple Lincoln', *New Internationalist*, October 1990, p. 9.

⁴⁶ James Boyle, 'A Theory of Law and Information: Copyright, Spleens, Blackmail, and Insider Trading', *California Law Review*, vol. 80, no. 6 (1992), pp. 1529–30.

⁴⁷ The contradiction came to a head with a resolution—the 'Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources'—passed at the 1983 meeting of the Food and Agricultural Organization which attempted to extend the principles of common heritage and free exchange to all categories of germplasm, the developed nations have refused to comply with the resolution. See Kloppenburg, *First the Seed*, pp. 172–3, Correa, 'Biological Resources', p. 154.

without depletion of the resource; only access to it can be controlled. At once intangible and diffuse,⁴⁸ it is thus different in kind from other commodities: if I tell you something, I still 'possess' it myself, and 'the more [knowledge] is shared, the more it grows'.⁴⁹ Yet the argument that information is not in itself a scarce resource comes precisely from those groups that have sought to make it so. The commodification of the genetic commons has been effected by means of an investment of work, knowledge and capital in a public good so that it may then be treated as a scarce private good. It has been an act of enclosure rather than an opening of the public domain.

The Public Domain

The concept of a commons provides no straightforward answers, however, to the question of the equitable distribution of resources. Indeed, in the contemporary political imaginary it tends to work as a figure of the over-use of scarce resources—a figure of waste rather than equity. In a sense, this meaning of the term is already prefigured in Locke's equation of the commons with the 'wast', the area of uncultivated manorial land outside the fields.⁵⁰ Locke's notion of the commons is predicated, however, on abundance, and any encroachment on it by means of property rights developed out of productive labour—which are based in turn on the property right in one's own person—is always qualified by the caveat that there must be 'enough, and as good left in common for others'.⁵¹ The contemporary understanding of the commons, by contrast, is largely built upon a Malthusian predicate of scarcity. The key text here is Garrett Hardin's 1968 article 'The Tragedy of the Commons'. A version of the 'prisoner's dilemma' paradox, Hardin's argument can be stated as a fable: given a piece of common pasture, each herdsman who grazes his cattle on it will, 'as a rational being', seek 'to maximize his gain'; thus 'each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limits—in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all'.⁵² Hardin then extrapolates from this fable to a number of areas in which the commons has had to be abandoned under pressure: the gathering of food, the unregulated disposal of waste, the unlicensed use of the airwaves, and—inevitably—the uncontrolled expansion of the population.

The model is that of an unrestrained competition between individuals without common interests or the capacity to negotiate shared rights of access. Set up in these terms, however, the model misses the historically

⁴⁸ See Raymond T. Nimmer and Patricia Ann Krauthaus, 'Information as a Commodity: New Imperatives of Commercial Law', *Law and Contemporary Problems*, vol. 55, no. 3 (1992), pp. 104–5.

⁴⁹ Jim Davis and Michael Stack, 'Knowledge in Production', *Race and Class*, vol. 34, no. 3 (1992), p. 3.

⁵⁰ John Locke, 'The Second Treatise of Government', *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, Cambridge 1960, p. 315, as the editor notes, however, this was often a grazing area of some value.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

⁵² Garrett Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons', *Science*, vol. 162, 1968, p. 1244.

interesting questions of the social regulation of the commons—in the specific and plural use of that word: the ways in which scarce resources were allocated by means of complex manorial customs governing rights and limitations on rights.⁵³ In his discussion of the English enclosure movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, E.P. Thompson points to the derivation of Hardin's argument from the propagandists of parliamentary enclosure; what it overlooks, he says, 'is that the commoners themselves were not without commonsense. Over time and over space the users of the commons have developed a rich variety of institutions and community sanctions which have effected restraints and stints upon use'.⁵⁴ The commons were a governed space, and their destruction had to do with the pressures of capitalist agriculture upon coincident use-rights, together with the sheer political power of the landholding class, rather than with competition on an equal footing between isolated individuals.

In an essay explicitly directed against Hardin's pessimism, Carole Rose similarly seeks to reclaim the logic of the public good by which the commons was governed. Reading three lines of precedent in US case law for an 'inherently public property' in such things as roadways and waterfront (the land between low and high tides), she finds a continuance of customary rights—neither state property nor an exclusive private-property right—in certain areas of modern law. 'Custom', she writes, 'is the method through which an otherwise unorganized public can order its affairs authoritatively', and the concept thus suggests a way of managing a commons 'differently from exclusive ownership by either individuals or governments. The intriguing aspect of customary rights is that they vest property rights in groups that are indefinite and informal, yet nevertheless capable of self-management'.⁵⁵ Although the enclosure of the manorial commons had by the nineteenth century largely eradicated customary claims for uses such as pasturing and wood-gathering, those traditional rights nevertheless gave evidence that, even in a situation of scarcity, a commons need not be a chaos of conflicting property claims. In the vestigial existence of the category of customary rights in doctrine concerning roadways and waterfronts, 'the "unorganized public" begins to seem more like a civilized and self-policing group. Custom, in short, can tame and moderate the dreaded rule of capture that supposedly turns every commons into a waste'.⁵⁶ It has, moreover, a specifically economic rationale as well in that the expansive and open-ended use it encourages may actually enhance the value of certain kinds of property: increase of scale may produce positive rather than negative externalities. The example Rose gives is the customary right to hold maypole dances on private land, where 'the more persons who participate in a dance, the higher its value to each participant':⁵⁷ far from an increase of use having here a tragic outcome, this is the 'comedy of the commons'.

The pleasure of the dance is a kind of information—and this model of

⁵³ See Lynda L. Butler, 'The Commons Concept: An Historical Concept with Modern Relevance', *William and Mary Law Review*, vol. 23, 1982, pp. 853–4.

⁵⁴ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, London 1993, p. 107.

⁵⁵ Carole Rose, 'The Comedy of the Commons: Custom, Commerce, and Inherently Public Property', *The University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 53, no. 3 (1986), p. 742.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 746.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 767.

the enhancement of the value of a commons through an increase in use works particularly well in the case of shared information, which is not depleted by use. Earlier I used the notion of a 'library model' in order to set up a counterpart to the regime of commodified information. The metaphor is a useful one both logically and historically, although it does not by any means entail a straightforward dichotomy of gift and commodity forms

Public Libraries Under Threat

A library is a collection of informational materials, traditionally but not necessarily printed matter, which have typically been bought in the market but which, in most public library systems, do not circulate as commodities. But neither do these materials circulate as gifts; they are, rather—to pick up Marcel Mauss's term—*prestations*, 'gifts' that return without conferring any rights of ownership or permanent use. At the same time, loaned library materials create no personal ties of obligation and lack the coerciveness of the various forms of *prestation* that Mauss describes. In this sense, they partake of the impersonality and the abstractness of the commodity form, but unlike commodities they have also been largely free of the forms of coercion—the constraints on access and use—that tend to flow from the price mechanism. While the 'library model' thus tends to collapse rather than to dichotomize the categories of gift and commodity, it does nevertheless represent a genuine alternative to the privatization of the commons in information.

Public libraries as we know them came into being as part of that massive expansion of state institutions in mid-nineteenth century Europe and North America that also produced the public schooling system, post offices, railways, and public hospitals, and which set an ethos of public service against the monopolistic tendencies of the uncontrolled market.⁵⁸ Their present existence is framed by a tension between that expanded model of the state and its role in the provision of free—that is, subsidized—public services, and a more restrictive view of the state which seeks to open the provision of information to market forces. To put it crudely, a model centred on informing citizens has been replaced, at least in part, by a model in which choices are made by consumers. The causes of this shift are many and complex, but important, in the case of the public library system, has been the change in the status of information itself, from being 'economically valueless, mainly government produced and largely public, to being value added, commercially sensitive and high cost'.⁵⁹ Thus, to take a specific example, the attempt by some governments to ensure that libraries are able to rent out computer software and to make it available for use on the premises has been bitterly fought by the software industry.⁶⁰

Herbert and Anita Schuller identify a 1982 US Government report as a

⁵⁸ Geoff Mulgan, 'The "Public Service Ethos" and Public Libraries', Comedia Research Working Papers, no 6, *KPS*, Brisbane 1993, p 2.

⁵⁹ Liz Greenhalgh, 'The Place of the Library', Comedia Research Working Papers, no 2, *KPS*, Brisbane 1993, p 5.

⁶⁰ Leslie Tilley, 'Software for the Lending', *The Times*, 25 January 1990.

turning point in the progressive weakening of the 'library model'.⁶¹ Announcing an end to the principle of cooperation between the public and private information sectors, the report represents 'the private industry's challenge to the right of the public sector—government, libraries, universities, and so on—to engage in *any* activities the industry regards as its own province'.⁶² (Similar positions have been enunciated in recent years in relation to the Internet, seen as 'a "subsidized" threat to commercial service providers'.)⁶³ The screws are thenceforth on the public library system, perhaps the most genuinely popular of all cultural institutions,⁶⁴ not only to implement various local forms of commercial practice—'charging users for information, relying on private vendors for databases, contracting out functions to private firms, and so on'⁶⁵—but more generally to relinquish its primary role in the provision of information.

The tension between free public provision and the pressures to treat information as a commodity with a price is an aspect of the aporia that organizes all liberal and neo-liberal theories of the market. In order to work efficiently and fairly, any market relies on 'perfect information'—information that is 'free, complete, instantaneous, and universally available';⁶⁶ at the same time, as Boyle argues, 'the *actual* market structure of contemporary society depends on information *itself* being a commodity—costly, partial, and deliberately restricted in its availability'.⁶⁷ The profit structure of markets directly undermines the basis of the market system itself. If structural breakdown is nevertheless avoided, it is because this tension is displaced into an endlessly deferred promise of the overcoming of information scarcity on the one hand, in the dynamic of production of new information, and, on the other, in an increasing mining of the commons in information through the ongoing privatization of the public domain.

The concept of the public domain has a precise application in modern legal systems, where it forms the cornerstone of copyright law and indeed of intellectual-property doctrine generally. Yet the concept is a purely residual one: rather than being itself a set of specific rights, the public domain is that space, that possibility of access, which is left over after all other rights have been defined and distributed.⁶⁸ It has had a shadowy legal presence through common-law principles such as fair use, through administrative measures such as freedom-of-information

⁶¹ *Public Sector/Private Sector Interaction in Providing Information Services*, Washington, DC 1982; this document is a report of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and it is discussed in Herbert I. Schiller and Anita R. Schiller, 'Libraries, Public Access to Information, and Commerce', in Vincent Mosco and Janet Wasko, eds, *The Political Economy of Information*, Madison 1988, pp. 159–60.

⁶² Schiller and Schiller, 'Libraries, Public Access to Information, and Commerce', p. 160.

⁶³ Bruce Juddery, 'Net Threatens Private Profits', *Campus Review*, 20–26 October 1994, p. 1.

⁶⁴ This argument is made in the Comedia Research Paper *Borrowed Time. The Future of Public Libraries in the UK*, ICPS, Brisbane 1993, p. 17.

⁶⁵ Schiller and Schiller, 'Libraries, Public Access to Information, and Commerce', p. 160.

⁶⁶ Boyle, 'A Theory of Law and Information', p. 1437.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ See David Lange, 'Recognizing the Public Domain', *Law and Contemporary Problems*, vol. 44, no. 4 (1981).

regulations or through statutory protection of free speech, but its lack of positive doctrinal elaboration leaves it vulnerable to erosion. It is a concept which is in many ways in crisis.

The Rationale of Copyright

Copyright law divides the 'work' between one part which can be held as private property, and another in which no property right can inhere. This division developed, towards the end of the eighteenth century and in close proximity to the romantic paradigm of authorship, as a distinction between 'idea' and 'expression', where the 'idea' remains a common good and it is the 'expressive' dimension of texts that is able to give rise to a property claim. This claim is limited in extent; although it is modelled on property rights in land, it gives no right of total exclusion—it merely restricts the making of copies—or of prohibition on use. Unlike real property rights, the copyright expires after a certain term, and once lost cannot be appropriated—as an unowned good—by later comers.⁶⁹

The dichotomy of idea and expression, a logically problematic distinction insofar as these are relational rather than fixed and identifiable categories,⁷⁰ corresponds, historically and theoretically, to the attempt to reconcile two contradictory interests: on the one hand, the provision of a financial incentive to authors and, through them, an incentive for the production of new knowledge; on the other, the protection of public access to knowledge including, quite crucially, protection of the raw materials on which later authors will draw.⁷¹ It is this aspect that Jessica Litman stresses in her defence of the concept of public domain—and her argument that it provides a stronger doctrinal foundation for copyright law than the concept of 'originality': the public domain is 'a device that permits the rest of the system to work by leaving the raw material of authorship available for authors to use',⁷² whereas a rigorously enforced notion of originality would quickly make plagiarists of all authors.

At the same time, Litman is concerned by the fact that the public domain is defined negatively and without any precise conceptual rationale. US copyright law denies protection to 'ideas, methods, systems, facts, utilitarian objects, titles, themes, plots, *scènes à faire*, words, short phrases and idioms, literary characters, style, or works of the federal

⁶⁹ Wendy Gordon, 'An Inquiry into the Merits of Copyright: The Challenges of Consistency, Consent, and Encouragement Theory', *Stanford Law Review*, no. 41, July 1989, p. 1375.

⁷⁰ See John Frow, 'Repetition and Limitation: Computer Software and Copyright Law', *Screen*, vol. 29, no. 1 (1988), pp. 14–16.

⁷¹ See Peter Jaszi, 'Toward a Theory of Copyright: The Metamorphoses of "Authorship"', *Duke Law Journal*, 1991, p. 464. Many particular doctrinal constructs are simply attempts to mediate the basic contradiction between public benefit and private reward. Their instability is guaranteed because the two goals are irreconcilable. The relation between 'first authors' and 'later authors' is discussed at some length in *Sony Corporation of America v Universal City Studios, Inc.* and in my commentary on the case ('Timeshift: Technologies of Reproduction and Intellectual Property', *Economy and Society*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1994), pp. 291–304), as well as—from a quite different perspective—in William M. Landes and Richard Posner, 'An Economic Analysis of Copyright', *Intellectual Property Law Review*, 1990.

⁷² Jessica Litman, 'The Public Domain', *Emory Law Journal*, vol. 39, no. 4 (1990), p. 968.

government', and this 'hodgepodge of unprotectible matter' has been assembled without overarching justification.⁷³ Most of the doctrine defining the extent of the public domain characterizes these elements of textuality as *exceptions*, and most of the definitive cases have involved a defensive reaction on the part of the courts against far-ranging claims based on the supposition that authorial 'originality' carries with it inherent property rights.

The encroachment of property claims on previously reserved areas of the public domain has been facilitated by the incoherence and negativity of the concept, and by the more general weakening over the past two decades of the notion of a common weal. Copyright protection now extends to 'an extraordinary variety of products that saturate our society'.⁷⁴ A later, more pessimistic article of Litman's worries that 'copyright law may be developing into the engine that drives an information policy sharply restrictive of the public's access to ideas and information',⁷⁵ as 'a tide of strong protectionism in influential commentary has encouraged the courts to view copyright as a broad property right'.⁷⁶ The landmark *Feist* case,⁷⁷ which adhered to the letter of the law in denying copyright protection to facts, caused an uproar precisely because it went so strongly against this trend

Litman lists four areas in which the trend is evident. The first is the protection of facts by the back-door method of granting protection of the 'form' in which factual material is 'expressed'. The second is the piecemeal repeal of the first-sale doctrine, which has traditionally granted the purchaser a broad range of rights of use, including commercial use, of a copyrighted work. The third is the extension of protection to government-developed databases and software, as a prelude to their commercialization. And the fourth is the conflict between the fair-use exemption—defending a range of rights of public access—and moral rights principles, especially as the latter have been used to prohibit use of unpublished works (Jaszi refers to moral rights doctrine in these cases as representing 'a charter for private censorship')⁷⁸ and to give, for complex technical reasons, almost unqualified protection to computer software. Litman concludes that the principle of authorial rights inherent in the idea/expression dichotomy, and the principle of a reserved commons in information embodied in the fair-use exemption, are in fundamental contradiction, and that the public interests represented in each are in the process of being eroded by default.⁷⁹ Contemporary information policy, under pressure from industry groups and considerations of short-term political expediency, sets the

⁷³ *Ibid*, pp 992–3

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 995

⁷⁵ Jessica Litman, 'Copyright and Information Policy', *Law and Contemporary Problems*, vol 55, no 2 (1992), p 187

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p 188

⁷⁷ *Feist Publications v Rural Telephone Service Company*, 111 S Ct 1282 (1991)

⁷⁸ Jaszi, 'Toward a Theory of Copyright', p 497

⁷⁹ Marlin Smith makes a similar case about the erosion of the fair-use principle in recent cases involving parody of copyrighted work, where judges have privileged the test of economic harm over public rights to access to creative work. Marlin H Smith, 'Note: The Limits of Copyright: Property, Parody, and the Public Domain', *Duke Law Journal*, no 42, 1993, pp. 1233–72.

conditions for an increasing enclosure of the commons in information under the rubric of copyright

The Public Realm

All uses of the concept of the commons imply in one way or another the concept of the public sphere—which in turn cuts across the gift/commodity opposition in interesting ways. Richard Sennett has documented the shift in the word 'public' from a generalized conception of the common good, *res publica*, to its modern sense, fully developed by the eighteenth century, of a special region of sociability passed outside the life of the family and intimate friends.⁸⁰ Both uses of the word conceive of the public domain as a space of association between strangers; the difference between them lies in the intensity with which this sphere comes to be opposed to that of privacy, and the increasingly negative connotations that it acquires.

Western liberalism from Locke onwards is built on the logic of the opposition of a public sphere of citizenship and formal equality to the private sphere of civil society in which real differences of social status and power are operative. The dilemma that follows from this separation is that liberal theory 'must exalt the virtues of egalitarianism, of each person's voice counting equally and, at the same time, confine that egalitarianism to the public sphere'⁸¹—which means, by and large, to the state. The enclosure of the commons conforms to this logic of division between an egalitarian public sphere and a private and hierarchical sphere of individual power and interest.

Yet there is neither a logical nor an historical necessity for the public sphere to be equated with the state, or to figure as the opposite of civil society. In Habermas's account of the formation of *Öffentlichkeit* (the bourgeois public sphere), this category is coextensive with civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) and embraces the *public* virtues of commerce. In the same way, a Memphis court ruling on Elvis Presley's fame defined the public domain in terms of free access to the market;⁸² and Carole Rose argues that one reason why roadways and waterways were so tenaciously held in US law to be inherently public spaces is the persistent association of commerce and trade with the sorts of 'interactive' uses that actually increase the value of the commons.⁸³ The concept of civil society, which includes the market as a crucial component, has historically been understood both as a realm of 'private' rather than state activity—indeed as a protection against the state's incursions on personal freedom—and as a 'public' space of the free and open flow of information and trade. It is in this sense that it has historically been possible to equate cultural works both with a notion of the public good and with an intensification of cultural commodification;⁸⁴ and it is for this reason that the category of the market occupies so ambivalent a position in relation to the distinction

⁸⁰ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, London 1977, pp. 16–17

⁸¹ Boyle, 'A Theory of Law and Information', p. 1434

⁸² *Memphis Development Foundation v Factors, Etc., Inc.*, 616 F.2d 956 (6th Cir.), cert. denied, 449 U.S. 953 (1980), at 960

⁸³ Rose, 'The Comedy of the Commons', p. 770

⁸⁴ See Celia Lury, *Cultural Rights: Technology, Legality and Personality*, London 1993, p. 107

between the public and the private—it is a 'public' fact in relation to the family, but a 'private' fact *vis-à-vis* the state.⁸⁵

All of this makes much more complicated Titmuss's attempt, in his classic study of donative and commercial blood-collection systems, to define the state as the domain of an altruism that is in some sense gift-like.⁸⁶ Yet the practical consequence of the way we divide the public from the private is precisely the one that Titmuss was concerned with: the question of the extent to which social goods should be administered and allocated by public or by private means. Should it be the case—to use an example of James Boyle's—that, as in the US, access to medicine is a private matter dependent on my ability to pay, while the right to a lawyer is granted in the Constitution, and I get one whether I can pay or not? Or should the opposite be the case, as it is for me in Australia? By what rationale should 'private' branches of law like torts make restitution for loss of earnings on the basis of very unequal levels of income—the wealthier I am, the more I get—while 'public' branches of law such as criminal law reject differential treatment out of hand?⁸⁷ Beyond these very general questions of principle lie a host of policy issues to do with equity, access, and efficiency, which are organized around precisely the same question of the socially contested division between 'public' and 'private' mechanisms for the administration and distribution of social goods. The anti-government rhetoric and the wave of privatizations of state institutions in most countries of the advanced capitalist and former-communist world over the last two decades have been the most visible outcome of these questions in the area of policy.

The 'positive' concept of the public domain that I have projected here—a reserved domain of inalienable personal and social goods and rights—is intended as a way around some of the conceptual impasses that flow from the notion of a transcendental and autonomous sphere of personhood which is prior to and essentially untouched by property relations and which exists in a 'private' rather than a 'public' space. Public-domain rights are those rights that, rather than deriving from personhood, precede and enable it. They are rights to the raw materials of human life: language, ideas, an inherited culture, a 'common heritage' of environmental resources, bodily integrity, civil entitlement. These are not 'natural' rights, located in an originary contract or a state of nature, but customary social rights, developed and recognized as a provisional end state of the struggle for civilized conditions of life—and of course, whatever their recognition, they are always contested. Like all rights, they represent a balance between conflicting demands, and they carry with them a corresponding set of obligations to the common good.

Everyday Citizens

Yet there are, inevitably, disadvantages and limitations attaching to such a conception of the public domain. One is that the category of *citizen*—the form of personhood most closely associated with it and currently

⁸⁵ See Boyle, 'A Theory of Law and Information', p. 1436.

⁸⁶ Richard Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship. From Human Blood to Social Policy*, London 1970.

⁸⁷ Boyle, 'A Theory of Law and Information', p. 1435.

fashionable in a number of post-leftist discourses—is in many ways a nostalgic concept, predicated on the recovery of a lost but once flourishing public sphere. (Philip Elliott, for example, writes of a shift ‘from involving people in society as political citizens of nation states towards involving them as consumption units in a corporate world’).⁸⁸ The ring of officialdom to the word, too—which makes it virtually equivalent to *good citizen*—covers over the fact that many of the conditions for full and active citizenship are not present, not, at least, in the traditional ways, in mass-mediated societies. Margaret Morse writes eloquently of the difficulty of strengthening genuinely ‘public’ values in a world structured by mobile privatization and an ‘attenuated fiction effect in everyday life’ which slowly and pervasively undermines the ‘sense of different levels of reality and of incommensurable difference between them’. The difficulty is precisely that of appealing to traditional notions of civic responsibility and the public space of the agora in the context of ‘a built environment that is already evidence of dream-work in the service of particular kinds of commerce, communication, and exchange’ and of a representational apparatus in which ‘the public and private worlds outside are distanced ontologically under several other layers of representation’.⁸⁹ Imagined communities may command civic allegiance, but not imaginary ones.

A further limitation to the category of citizen lies in its silent genderedness. The designation of public space as masculine and of private, intimate or domestic, space as feminine has historically accompanied—as at once cause and effect—the restriction, whether by formal or informal mechanisms, of full citizenship to men.⁹⁰ This restriction is bound up in multiple ways with the association of women with the gift: on the one hand, their status as themselves the gift within systems of matrimonial exchange and, on the other, the encoding of nurture and the gift of life as the woman’s gift, a power within her gift, and thus at once beneficent and dangerous, the opposite of the enlightened abstraction of the commodity form. This opposition entails a ready-made rationale for the exclusion of women from the public sphere, and then in turn for the shaping of its rules to reflect this exclusion. ‘What should be remembered’, writes Rosalyn Diprose, ‘is that the giving which is consistently forgotten by the law is woman’s and the gift which the law consistently recognizes is man’s’.⁹¹

More generally, a concept of the public good grounded in the category of the inalienable gift cannot be applied in any direct way to the social. The state is not a ‘gift’ domain because its forms of sociability do not involve the magical and dangerous ties of personal obligation. At this level, obligation is an abstract matter. Nor of course is the market a domain of

⁸⁸ Philip Elliott, ‘Intellectuals, the “Information Society” and the Disappearance of the Public Sphere’, in Richard Collins et al, eds, *Media, Culture and Society. A Critical Reader*, London 1986, p. 106

⁸⁹ Margaret Morse, ‘An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall, the Television’, in Patricia Mellencamp, ed., *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Bloomington 1990, p. 213

⁹⁰ See the discussion in Rosemary Pringle, *Secretaries Talk. Sexuality, Power and Work*, Sydney 1988, pp. 227–30

⁹¹ Rosalyn Diprose, ‘Giving Corporeality Against the Law’, forthcoming in Pheng Chea, David Fraser and Judy Grbich, eds, *Thinking the Body Through the Law*, Sydney 1996

gift, both because it is built on the price mechanism and because, like the state, its workings are complex, impersonal, and abstract. In any strict sense, the concept of gift is irrelevant to the structural understanding of modern societies, with the exception of the micro-level of everyday life. There is no state sphere in traditional gift economies, and neither, therefore, is there a civil society—the distinction is simply not meaningful.

Yet that exception is crucial. Everyday talk is the model of all free exchange of information, and the realm of the everyday is the place where, through the constant transformation of commodity relations into gift relations, it becomes difficult to hold the two terms in their categorical purity. It is a realm permeated by the archaic patterns of gift-obligation—the dangerous, fluid, subtle generosities that bind members into crystallized orders of relation, in all dimensions of human life, from which they cannot easily be released. These patterns of obligation are, at the same time, in tension with the contractual rationality of the commodity, which produces quite different forms of the everyday. It may produce greater equalities as well as greater inequalities, it may enhance or reduce the sharing of wealth. It can be seen as a liberation from the 'antiquated and dangerous gift economy',⁹² or as a destruction of human sharing; but it is never neutral in relation to the economy of gift. Gift and commodity exchange are mutually overdetermined: they merge with each other, absorb or transform each other, or clash in open contradiction. The energies, the social intensities they set in play structure and continuously transform the moral ground of everyday life—our fundamental capacity to be, to have, and to know.

⁹² Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 52

Contemporary Economic Stagnation in World Historical Perspective

There is little dispute now that the history of Western capitalism since the end of World War II can be partitioned into two distinct periods. Its 'Golden Age', lasting roughly through the end of the 1960s, was characterized by rapid economic growth, low unemployment, mild business cycles and rising mass living standards, especially for the white, male sector of the working class. The 'Leaden Age', running from the early 1970s into the present, has been distinguished by slow growth, high unemployment, more severe business cycles, and stagnating or declining living standards for the majority. This fundamental economic transformation has also redefined politics in the West. Much of the success of the Golden Age was attributed at the time to the development of large-scale government interventions in the market that aimed to ameliorate both the severity of business cycles and the worst disparities of wealth, income and opportunity that characterized pre-war capitalism. As the Leaden Age advanced, the hegemony of 'big government' policies yielded to an ascendant Thatcher-Reagan agenda of unqualified support for big business and similarly unqualified opposition to any sort of downward redistribution initiatives.

One of the most prominent aspects of this transition from the Golden to the Leaden Age has been the evolution of financial markets and practices. The Golden Age was characterized by low real interest rates and low levels of private indebtedness, relatively little speculative trading in financial markets, and most generally, a degree of financial stability that was historically unprecedented. Extensive government regulation also prevailed in this period, both within domestic economies and, through the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates, in the broader realm of international currency markets. The justification for such tight regulatory regimes was not hard to find, given that destabilizing forces emanating from speculative financial markets—including most prominently the 1929 Wall Street crash—were widely held to have been a major cause of the Depression.

The Leaden Age, by contrast, has seen the return of high levels of private indebtedness and historically high real interest rates, a revival of highly active speculative financial markets, and much more frequent financial crisis episodes—the most recent being the December 1995 crisis ignited by the collapse of the Mexican Peso. Accompanying these Leaden Age financial patterns has been a world-wide dismantling of financial

regulatory controls, the most prominent example being the abandonment in 1971 of the Bretton Woods system. The resurgence of speculative financial practices and decline of regulatory controls in the Leaden Age also created conditions in which the overriding concerns of financial capitalists for tight money, high interest rates and low inflation have established the acceptable parameters of economic policy in Western countries.

Giovanni Arrighi's *The Long Twentieth Century* is a highly ambitious effort to explain, as his subtitle puts it, 'money, power and the origins of our time', that is, precisely this contemporary transition from Golden to Leaden Age capitalism.¹ The premise which animates the study is that the current period does indeed represent a fundamental transformation of Western capitalism. However, such a transformation is itself part of the normal pattern in the development of Western capitalism which can be traced back to the fourteenth century. It is therefore necessary to evaluate the contemporary cycle in light of previous transformative processes to understand the forces producing change, as well as the most likely end results of this change. Marx said, 'The history of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living,' and Arrighi is committed to bringing such spectral connections into the strong light of day.

Financial Expansions in Long Centuries

Arrighi holds that the current period is most likely the terminal phase of a historical process that has been advancing throughout the 'long twentieth century'. Two fundamental developments, beginning in the 1870s, represent the starting point of the long twentieth century. One is the decline of Britain from and rise of the US to the status of the hegemonic capitalist power. The other is the first period of protracted economic depression throughout the Western capitalist economies, which lasted from the early 1870s until the mid-1890s. Arrighi argues that the 1970s mark the initial phase in the demise of this long century when we begin to observe the rising power of financial capital and the spread of speculative financial practices. Indeed, a central contention of Arrighi's study is that such periods of 'financial expansion' represent the 'autumn' of a prevailing capitalist order as it slowly gives way to a new order. Arrighi argues that the patterns of transformation that are present over the long twentieth century are comparable to three previous 'long centuries': the Genoese sixteenth century, the Dutch seventeenth century, and the British nineteenth century. The question he poses by the end of the study is whether Japanese capitalism, perhaps along with other rising East Asian economies, is in the process of supplanting US hegemony as the twenty-first century gathers force.

Fernand Braudel was the first to advance the position that each of the long centuries have been characterized by an autumn phase of financial

¹ Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of our Time*, Verso, London 1994, ISBN 1-85984-195-6 (hardback) £39.95, ISBN 1-85984-015-9 (paperback), £14.95. Arrighi himself does not rely on the Golden and Leaden Age terminology, which comes from Joan Robinson's extensive writings on economic growth.

expansion. But Braudel's analysis of this pattern raised more questions than it could answer. What is the relationship between financial expansions and the transition from one long century to the next? Arrighi accepts Charles Tilly's sharp criticism that Braudel never provides a satisfactory explanation of the interconnections he observes. Or to be more precise, Tilly showed that Braudel gives credence to so many alternative and even conflicting explanations that, in the end, there is no sense in which Braudel himself holds seriously to any view.² Arrighi is nevertheless convinced that Braudel has identified a fundamental pattern in the way capitalism has evolved over long periods of time. The stated ambition of *The Long Twentieth Century* is therefore to provide a much tighter analytic framework for understanding the patterns identified by Braudel. Arrighi writes, 'I let Braudel plough for me the high seas of world historical fact, and chose for myself the smaller task of processing his over-abundant supply of conjectures and interpretations into an economical, consistent, and plausible explanation of the rise and full expansion of the capitalist world system' (p. xi)

But this does not mean that Arrighi aims to address his topic narrowly. On the contrary, there is a panoramic sweep to *The Long Twentieth Century* that brings within its range an exceptional array of themes. His most basic concern is to investigate the inner dynamics of what Arrighi terms the four 'systemic cycles of accumulation' corresponding to the four long centuries. This includes, in particular, explaining the processes through which, in each of the four cycles, financial expansions become the predominant feature of an economy's trajectory of growth.

But in addressing this question, several others naturally emerge. One is the relationship between Arrighi's analysis of long centuries and financial expansions, and the substantial existing literature building from Kondratieff's conception of long waves of capitalist accumulation. Arrighi contends that the literature on Kondratieff waves and related secular patterns has become excessively focused on the cyclical movements of prices over time. Arrighi does not regard this as a fruitful research agenda since it too easily begs the central question of how the social, economic, and political forces intrinsic to capitalism are responsible for generating long cycles. Thus, Arrighi is counterposing his historical mapping as an alternative approach to understanding the long development of capitalism because it provides 'far more valid and reliable indicators of what is specifically capitalist in the modern world system than secular or Kondratieff cycles'. (p. 7)

Arrighi's focus on the predominant national powers—Genoa, Holland, Britain, and the US—in each of the four systemic cycles of accumulation also naturally places his work alongside the literature on, as the title of Paul Kennedy's recent book terms it, 'The Rise and Fall of Great Powers'.³ Arrighi aims to bring to this question a far more thoroughgoing set of analytic ideas than have been attempted heretofore. He builds primarily from the Marxian tradition, and in particular the

² Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, New York 1984, pp. 70–4

³ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, New York 1987

'World Systems' perspective with which he has long been associated. But he also appropriates insights from unexpected sources. These include the historical model of John Hicks which contends that mercantilism advanced through diminishing the risks of trade; the Ronald Coase-Alfred Chandler view of modern corporations as fundamentally an instrument for minimizing transaction costs; and the contemporary literature on 'flexible specialization' as the newly emergent high-productivity challenge to the corporate mode of production

All of these themes, moreover, remain fundamentally in the service of explaining the contemporary period and the outlook for the future. As such, Arrighi also pushes his analysis into important debates on, among other things, the role of the Cold War in boosting, then undermining, US hegemony in the post-war period, the causes of the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the distinctions between East Asian and Western capitalism, and the sources of declining profitability and economic growth in the contemporary Leaden Age. There can be no doubt that Arrighi has produced a work of remarkable scope. Given this, it is reasonable to expect that he could not possibly have been uniformly successful in dealing with all of the issues that concern him, or that he could construct an analytic synthesis that is coherent and persuasive at all levels. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of his effort?

Organizational Structures and Hegemonic Power

One area where Arrighi has made provocative connections is in the relationship between territorial domination and forms of economic organization. He argues that one major factor which sets the four systemic cycles apart from one another is whether they exercised their hegemonic power through an 'extensive' or 'intensive' mode of control. He argues that Genoa and Britain became dominant through successfully extending the territorial domain of the capitalist world economy. By contrast, the Dutch and US regimes were 'intensive' in that they were responsible for consolidation rather than expansion of the capitalist world economy.

The world system thus alternates between extensive and intensive forms of hegemony, in which the weaknesses of one mode of control eventually overtake its strengths, creating an opening for a new system of accumulation and a new hegemonic power. The Genoese and British system required them to be able to sustain political and economic control over an ever wider expanse of conquered territory, and their ability to do so inevitably faced limits. Correspondingly, the Dutch and US systems, whose primary mode of control was to reorganize existing imperial domains, also faced limits in their ability to consolidate power without become overly stifling and repressive. But when are such limits reached?

On this question, Arrighi draws fruitfully from different theories of business organization to provide new insights. He thus argues that the British empire was organized around what we now term a system of flexible specialization. It was characterized by a world-wide network of

small- and medium-sized firms which were brought together by the British state, which then acted as the protector as well as entrepôt for British business: 'By becoming the main commercial and financial entrepôt of the world, the British state created unique opportunities for businesses established in its metropolitan domains to specialize in high value-added activities, to obtain inputs from anywhere in the world that happened to be cheaper and to dispose of outputs anywhere in the world that happened to fetch the highest price.' (p. 284)

However, the weakness of this system is that its very success at extending its domain also opened ever wider interstices into which rival capitalist enterprises could insert themselves. When the rivals were able to gain a foothold, this created an intense degree of price competition to which the enterprises of even the hegemonic British were vulnerable. Thus Arrighi argues that the sprawling nature of the British flexible specialization system provided an opening for competitor capitalists to drive down prices, bringing the price deflation and depression of the 1870s.

The German and especially the US form of corporate organization then emerged as a solution to this problem of an excessively competitive form of capitalism. As Alfred Chandler has argued, the corporate system succeeded precisely through displacing the system in which free markets linked predominantly small enterprises into loose sets of associations. The corporate restructuring brought the variegated groups of firms under the control of a small group of monopolistic corporations. The successful monopolistic firms were then able to lower the transaction costs of doing business and to set and maintain high prices for their final products. This eliminated the intense price competition and depression that the last phase of the British system had generated, and set the stage for the US dominated systemic cycle of accumulation.

But can we then say that the crises of accumulation have been due to an exhaustion of each hegemon's mode of economic organization? Arrighi comes close to endorsing this view, writing, for example, that 'our analysis of systemic cycles of accumulation has shown that every material expansion of the capitalist world-economy has been based on a particular organizational structure, the vitality of which was progressively undermined by the expansion itself.' (p. 226) However, Arrighi does not maintain his focus on this idea. Indeed, it is precisely in trying to develop clear causal chains of reasoning in the movement from expansionary to contractionary phases in systemic cycles that his discussion falters.

For example, Arrighi does not follow through on his concern with organizational structure in explaining the decline of US hegemony in the long twentieth century. There is a substantial contemporary economics literature, tracing its origins to Berle and Means's classic 1932 study on the separation of ownership and management in the modern US corporation, which attributes the decline of the US economy since the 1970s to the growing inefficiencies of the corporate form of organization. In fact, Michael Jensen, a well-known contributor to this approach, was also the most prominent academic cheerleader for the wave of hostile takeovers

of the 1980s, since he saw this process as the means through which financial market forces would supplant the now exhausted corporate form with more focused organizational and ownership arrangements.⁴ In other words, the connection between organizational structure and 'financial expansions' is a central matter of concern in this view. Arrighi makes no mention of this literature, and more seriously, does not advance a coherent position of his own. Rather, he wavers between two mutually inconsistent views—one being that the US corporate form of organization has indeed become inefficient, the other that rival capitalist powers, especially in East Asia, have become equally or even more effective at operating under this same organizational structure.

Financial Dealings and Sources of Profitability

Arrighi's treatment of financial expansions themselves—his most basic matter of concern—suffers from a similar unevenness as he identifies important historical patterns but is unable to develop them within a coherent analytic framework. Following on from Braudel, Arrighi puts to good use the basic truth that a primary need of any capitalist order is to create flexibility—or liquidity—for capitalists. This enables capitalists to maximize their profit opportunities without having to commit themselves to any particular line of business. Financial markets and institutions exist precisely to meet this need. But, as Keynes explained so forcefully, liquid financial markets also invite short-term speculative behaviour by investors because they break the link between owning a firm and managing its productive activities in a profitable way. It follows that financial expansions would ensue when autumn descends on a given regime of accumulation, as capitalists become increasingly pressed to discover new profitable investment outlets. But the financial expansion will then also create destabilizing feedback effects to the extent, as Keynes put it, enterprise becomes a bubble on a whirlwind of speculation. Relative to Braudel's initial contributions, Arrighi has provided a much more systematic description of this process as it operates through the four long cycles of accumulation.

But what exactly are financial expansions, and in what ways do they operate as cause or effect during historical transitions? Arrighi is not at all clear on these matters. He characterizes financial expansions as being 'symptomatic of a situation in which the investment of money in the expansion of trade and production no longer serves the purpose of increasing the cash flow to the capitalist stratum as effectively as pure financial deals can'. (p. 8) But the term 'pure financial deals' here is mere hand-waving, and at no point in the book, despite several variations on this same passage, does he provide a more precise exposition.

This lack of clarity becomes even more evident when Arrighi attempts to

⁴ Basic references include Adolph Berle and Gardiner Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, New York 1932, and Michael Jensen, 'Eclipse of the Public Corporation', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 67, no. 4, (1989) pp. 61–77. For an excellent critique of the Jensen perspective, see James Crotty and Don Goldstein, 'Do US Financial Markets Allocate Credit Efficiently? The Case of Corporate Restructuring in the 1980s', in G. Dymalski, G. Epstein, and R. Pollin, eds, *Transforming the US Financial System. Equity and Efficiency for the 21st Century*, Armonk, NY 1993, pp. 253–86.

appropriate the circuits of capital formulations in Marx's *Capital* to his model of long cycles. Marx characterized the process of capitalist production as one in which capitalists begin with money, then either purchase existing commodities or finance the production of new commodities, only to then sell their newly held commodities for a profit, that is, for more money than the amount with which they began. The basic circuit then is money \rightarrow commodities \rightarrow more money, or $M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M'$. From this schema, it is clear that capitalists have no interest in the intrinsic value of the commodities that they either buy or whose production they pay for, only in the fact that they can subsequently sell them for a profit. Given this, the optimal situation for the capitalist would be to profit directly from money transfers themselves, or $M \rightarrow M'$, without having to deal with the production and exchange of commodities. Such a scenario would appear to characterize many 'pure financial deals' such as occur in the stock, bond, or foreign currency markets, in which only financial assets are traded, but the traders all seem to come out richer in the end.

Arrighi adapts Marx's analytic framework in dividing each long cycle into two phases. He calls the first phase one of 'material expansion' which he refers to as the equivalent of Marx's $M \rightarrow C$ process. The second phase occurs when material expansions decline and financial expansions gather force, which he says is equivalent to Marx's $C \rightarrow M'$ process. However, this adaptation obscures the underlying point of Marx's framework and of the logic operating in both the material and financial expansion phases of long cycles. It is that in both phases, the capitalist's initial money investment must create more money—profits—at the end of the process. The failure to do so adequately on a system-wide basis is what defines a crisis of capitalism.

It is only within this framework that we can meaningfully explore the process of financial expansions, or, more particularly, to understand how 'pure financial deals'—the $M \rightarrow M'$ circuit—could operate successfully on a sustained basis. Arrighi never explicitly poses the most basic question about the $M \rightarrow M'$ circuit, which is, where do the profits come from if not from the production and exchange of commodities?

In fact, there are three basic answers to this question. First, it may be that some capitalists are making money while others are losing, so that a redistribution is occurring within the capitalist class. In this case, we are talking about a 'financial expansion' only for those capitalists lucky or well-connected enough to be on the right side of a trade. For the economy as a whole though, there is no expansion of profits from pure financial dealings.

A second case occurs when, as a concomitant to the process of pure financial dealings, capitalists as a whole are able to force a redistribution of wealth and income in their favour. The capitalists then fight over the increased available profits through their financial market machinations. This scenario has operated frequently in the contemporary phase of financial expansion, such as in many instances of corporate takeovers. Here both buyers and sellers in a trade enjoy increased share prices or dividends because the new firm owners have forced down wages and tax

burdens by breaking previous commitments to workers and communities. Similar upward redistribution scenarios also apply to many historical instances in which governments squeeze their populations to make payments to their creditors on outstanding public debts.

A third way in which financial deals can be profitable on a sustained basis is if it enables capitalists to move their funds out of less profitable and into more profitable areas of material production and exchange. This is the process that is most clearly connected to the patterns described by Arrighi. But note here that the crucial factor is not that financial deals as such are taking place, but that new patterns are found for the profitable financing of productive activities, that is, the $M \rightarrow M'$ circuit of pure financial deals operates successfully only because underlying it is a newly successful $M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M'$ circuit. Arrighi's contention that this process can be characterized as a movement from a long $M \rightarrow C$ circuit a long $C \rightarrow M'$ circuit is simply a muddle. More generally, Arrighi's historical narrative would have benefited significantly from his being able to distinguish the three distinct sources of profit in $M \rightarrow M'$ dealings.

The View from Capitalism's 'Top Layer'

Arrighi's lack of clarity on this issue may have resulted in part from his decision to focus his study on what he calls the 'top layer' of activity within the capitalist order, that is, the relationship between government, business and financial elites as they struggle over territory, power and profits. Such a research strategy follows the logic of Braudel's provocative conception that capitalist processes as such really only operate at this top layer. For Braudel, the lower stages of self-sufficient activity and non-hierarchical market exchanges operate below this top layer of predator capitalism. While Braudel and Arrighi fully recognize that the top layer could not exist without the lower stages on which they depend, one can see how focusing on this top layer alone can lend itself to a view that, even for the system as a whole, profits can be sustained simply through various unspecified $M \rightarrow M'$ financial manoeuvrings.

Arrighi's focus on capitalism's top layer of activity also creates another set of analytic difficulties. This is with his treatment of what he has elsewhere termed 'anti-systemic movements'.⁵ The problem is especially evident in his discussion of the long twentieth century itself, when a consideration of the effects such movements have on capitalism's trajectory would have to incorporate the influence of socialism and the Cold War, social democracy and the welfare state, as well as Third World anti-imperialist struggles. It is useful here to compare Arrighi's treatment of these matters with Hobsbawm's vision of a 'short twentieth century' in his *The Age of Extremes*. Hobsbawm demarcates the twentieth century as consisting of 'the years from the outbreak of the first World War to the collapse of the USSR, which, as we can now see in retrospect, forms a coherent historical period that has now ended'.⁶ In short, Hobsbawm

⁵ Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Anti-Systemic Movements*, New York 1989.

⁶ E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991*, New York 1994, p. 5.

regards the socialist challenge and related matters as prime shapers of his twentieth century.

Arrighi does not seem to disagree substantially with Hobsbawm's assessment. Nor does Arrighi's own narrative ignore the various challenges from the Left. The problem is that they fit uneasily into his analytic framework. For example, Arrighi considers the military spending associated with the Cold War as having contributed significantly to the US-led economic boom after World War II, especially in the twenty-three years between the beginning of the Korean War and the winding down of US involvement in Vietnam. And yet he does not appear to regard the collapse of the Soviet Union as a defining event in the terminus of his twentieth century, certainly not in the way that the rise of East Asian capitalism marks an epochal turning point.

Considering the wide sweep of *The Long Twentieth Century* as a whole, one can find a useful analogy between its approach to understanding transitions between regimes of accumulation and its own strengths and weaknesses. Arrighi's stated first aim was to consolidate the overly extended reach of Braudel's narrative on the history of world capitalism. He has succeeded in this task, as his analytic framework is illuminating in the ways he sought it to be—most generally as a means to better understand long cycles of capitalist accumulation, and in particular to show the interconnections between long cycles, the evolution of hegemonic regimes and the processes of financial expansions, especially as these processes cast light on the contemporary situation. At the same time, his 'intensive' consolidating framework is too confining to incorporate all the central factors generating the patterns of capitalist development over the past six centuries. Moreover, Arrighi recognized the need for building upon explicit theoretical tools in his effort at consolidation, but he has utilized his chosen theoretical tools chosen with insufficient care, perhaps because of the difficulties of maintaining control over so formidable a project.

But the problem is not simply with Arrighi's approach to understanding the capitalist world system. The more general issue is his very ambition of seeking to sustain a narrative on the entire history of capitalism within a relatively rigid analytic model. This methodology comes into conflict with the increasingly wide recognition that economic systems are characterized by path dependency—or the related concepts of 'complexity' and 'hysteresis'—which is to say, the specific outcomes in any given period are contingent on a range of factors, and the ways these factors happen to combine will then set the terms for the next round of indeterminate combinations. Recognizing path dependency does not deny the importance of broad historical visions and overarching theories. But it does underscore the difficulty of making such analyses hold up in considering the detailed dynamics of any given historical period.

How well, finally, does Arrighi's approach help us understand the contemporary transition from Golden to Lead Age capitalism and the prospects before us? He has produced an original perspective on the broad forces underlying the ascendancy of financial capital in our current period. This is in itself a significant contribution. But his perspective is

not sufficiently focused to serve as more than a general guide for considering even the most immediate questions of concern, such as how specifically financial capital is contributing to the ongoing economic stagnation in the West and what types of policy measures and political coalitions would be capable of challenging their power. In short, Arrighi has demonstrated both the advantages of large ambition and the dangers of overreaching, in social science no less than in the history of hegemonic regimes.

Women, Class and Family

The problems with the study of the family by Europeanists are two-fold. Firstly the terms they use like 'family' are often vague and unsatisfactory for analytic purposes—though they may serve as general signposts. Secondly, there is little comparative perspective. Yet this is needed not only to define terms but more importantly because every statement about the relation of the 'nuclear family' to capitalism or the invention of childhood is making a claim not only about Europe but about the rest of the world.

The history of the family in Europe has become tied in with notions of that continent's unique achievements, especially in terms of 'capitalism' and 'modernization'. The knot needs to be untied, not to weaken the relation between production and reproduction, which Wally Seccombe emphasizes in his two books *A Millennium of Family Change* and *Weathering the Storm*, but to rationalize at least the pre-industrial situation by reassessing its uniqueness at all levels in relation to other regions of Eurasia.¹ When we do that, the strong association between certain 'family' variables and the development of mercantile capitalism—and modern systems of knowledge—in Europe becomes much more attenuated.² Later on, the rapidity and innovative character of large-scale industrial production did dramatically change the domestic lives of the masses, although those changes had and have their parallels in other parts of the world where there has been a sudden growth in urban living, with all the usual consequences of crowded accommodation, dependent production, the weakening role of extended kin groups—though not necessarily of extended domestic ties—relative anonymity, and looser community controls. However, here, as always, it is the nature of the link that is at stake. Was it the same for all classes, for both sexes? Were there not continuities as well as discontinuities that related to the different social domains of production and reproduction which allowed them a degree of autonomy? Did political and economic hegemony, both of which demand their own space, always dominate the family?

¹ Wally Seccombe, *A Millennium of Family Change: Feudalism to Capitalism in Northwestern Europe*, Verso, London 1992, £13.95, ISBN 1-85984-052-3; *Weathering the Storm: Working Class Families from the Industrial Revolution to the Fertility Decline*, Verso, London 1993, £13.95, ISBN 0-85984-064-7.

² This is a point I have developed in *The East in the West*, Cambridge 1996, and earlier in *The Oriental, the Ancient and the Primitive*, Cambridge 1990.

Wally Seccombe has written a comprehensive two-volume history of the family in north-western Europe from the early medieval period to the present, trying to link the systems of reproduction with those of production, and offering a critical perspective on much previous work in the field. It is the most valuable summary to date of the situation in this crucial part of the world. Some of Seccombe's basic assumptions about its role are built into his general Western models, but at another level his reassessment of the work of others is a signal success. Starting from a Marxist perspective, he concentrates on the transitions from feudalism to mercantile capitalism, to proto-industrialization and then to industrial capitalism, attempting, in the process, to do what Marxists have signally avoided doing in the past, that is, to reconcile demographic with social history. This division has tended to give us two kinds of family history: the harder variety centres upon numerical statements about the size of 'families'—in fact, households—and the softer on changes in *mentalités*. The history of the family must be built around both—the numerical material buried in parish registers, exploited by the Cambridge Group, as well as the diaries and legal documents that form the basis of the work of Stone, Ariès, and others. Lacking was any serious attempt at drawing together both these threads and their insertion, in any rigorous way, into the wider context of the major social changes through which the West has passed. These tasks Seccombe confronts head-on. In addition, he claims to take account of women's history, though here the force of his claim is not quite so strong.

Seccombe pursues this massive undertaking with very considerable scholarship and many insights. It is one of the great strengths of his survey of the history of the north-western European (mainly British) family that he consistently treats domestic groups not only as reproductive units—for the workforce as well as for kin-groups—but as productive ones, in pre-industrial societies where domestic groups usually work together but also in industrial ones where he sees reproduction as linked to productive processes mainly through wage incomes. His study will remain a source of reference and debate for many years to come. While other historians have attempted to relate factors such as the age of marriage to the price of corn, or 'modernization' of the family to the conditions of the market, he tries to associate the economy and the family in a much more comprehensive manner. To this end, he uses a version of the broadly Marxist concept of the mode of production, trying to link relations of kinship and marriage to productive relationships, though not in any absolutely determinative way.

There is no doubt that such an exercise needed to be undertaken. Seccombe has done so in a manner that summarizes a great deal of research and throws much light on changes in the family. If I do not see this work as entirely successful, that is partly because success is difficult to achieve in such a contentious field and partly because in dealing with this subject one needs to look outside Europe even to understand what happened within that continent. If Seccombe's account does not always command immediate assent all around, that is partly a comment upon the nature of a much disputed territory which conceals a minefield of hidden agendas

and ethnocentric prejudice. The family has been seen as contributing to, or the consequence of, a transformation of the economy and society that is considered to have taken place only in England, in north-western Europe, or possibly more widely in Europe. That is, the question of the structure of the family—demographically, developmentally, emotionally—is seen as part of the Uniqueness of the West and the European Miracle. Coming at the problem—like the sources he is dealing with—from a determinedly European standpoint, Seccombe is less critical of some of those assertions than he should be.

Seccombe's approach is more innovative for the later period (covered in *Weathering the Storm*) than for the earlier one. Here he draws out the full importance of proletarianization in the eighteenth century, with the changes in agricultural and proto-industrial production, and in the nineteenth, with the shift to industrial activity. The emphasis on change leads him into direct conflict with the demographic historians of the Cambridge Group, whom he sees as discounting change by concentrating on the formal structure of the household. Indirectly, he is equally critical of family historians of the *mentalité* tendency, for his own general position leans towards a demographic approach whereas the 'psychological' or cultural approaches, whether continuist (as in Macfarlane's work) or discontinuous (as in Stone's work), are largely ignored. He is looking for harder demographic and economic data than they often provide.

The neglect is perhaps carried too far, for while the results of the cultural approach have been disappointing—at least in a comparative perspective—there is undoubtedly a social, psychological element in kinship that needs to be linked to the prevailing socio-economic changes. It is this component that Seccombe sometimes tends to play down, for example, in his attempt to account for the 'obligation' which married children continue to feel when, in early industrial conditions, they expand their household to include 'destitute' parents. Such an approach makes some of his explanations too 'economistic', not because of what they include but because of what they omit.

Primogeniture Under Feudalism

In dealing with the family under feudalism, Seccombe stresses the significant role of the seigneurial system in commanding the labour power of peasants and in encouraging primogeniture. That was often the case, especially under the open-field agriculture of the manorial system where plots were organized for one man or family to work. But primogeniture is never absolute; it is always qualified by equity among kin, a kind of distributional ethic among those raised together, which requires allocations to other siblings. Moreover, it is found elsewhere, especially where land is a scarce resource. Indeed, the notion of a single main heir may well be initiated from below, as in rural France today where the code is equal division but the practice is very different. Nor is primogeniture the only system found with seigneurial domination. The diversity revealed in Yver's study of inheritance in sixteenth-century France would be incomprehensible from a more determinative point of view and the same could be said for the distribution of gavelkind, Borough French and Borough English in England.

The focus of Seccombe's account is farming families in the early period and the working class in the industrial one. Seignorial families are excluded, as are those of entrepreneurs, merchants and the bourgeoisie generally. While such a focus is entirely understandable, it does tend to overlook the vertical interaction of different layers of the society, at least outside the economic sphere. I take my examples from the period following the Industrial Revolution, but the principles are the same and embedded in earlier sumptuary legislation. Later, too, one finds the possible effects of class emulation—for example, in the disapproval of working wives in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the whole notion of 'moral motherhood' and after the First World War the use of contraception—as well as of the way in which some practices of the working class were subsequently adopted by other wage-earning groups—the abandonment of the dowry, common-law unions, the matrifocal family. At the same time, concentrating on the family among the employed leads to the neglect of the role of extended kinship and affinal networks among the entrepreneurial class who continue to have productive and financial property to pass down. The structure of their families was far less 'isolated nuclear' than that assumed to exist among the other classes. Here the 'men of property' may again have had some demonstration effect for other groups or for aspiring individuals in society.

A related problem of taking only one element in the population—or alternatively of aggregating the lot—is that one loses the perspective of class differences, which may be radical. In China one finds complex households among the rich, simple ones (stem) among the poor; that is a pattern that repeats itself in many parts of Europe. To treat nuclear households as the norm because they are in the majority is to interpret the norm in a purely statistical way. Its preponderance will depend upon the nature of the developmental cycle and the pattern of fission and in some cases fusion. If upper households (and older households) are extended (or 'expanded') it is difficult to see nuclear as the ideal at a societal level—perhaps even for a class; it is to lose sight of the importance of hegemony.

It follows from Seccombe's attempt to link the family with the political economy and to demonstrate the way that family forms are incorporated in modes of production that he rejects the view, attributed to the Cambridge Group, that the structure of the family did not change from the late-medieval period. That is, of course, the force of his title, *A Millennium of Family Change*. He notes firstly that this other notion takes a very narrow view of the family—in fact, it concerns household size and age of marriage, neglecting, for example, the changes in interpersonal relationships that Protestantism undoubtedly encouraged—and secondly that it denies any affect of the other major socio-economic changes on domestic life, an equally improbable approach, suggesting the inadequacy of the measures used. But Laslett is obviously not wrong about the data with which he is dealing. Indeed, as I have tried to show, the household is virtually everywhere a relatively small group, as is the conjugal family. Certain areas of kinship, marriage and the family, of reproductive systems, operate relatively independently of the mode of production, which does not have everything its own way. There is a significant degree of structural autonomy

Households and Kinship Groups

Secombe rightly criticizes the limitations of using the household as the basic unit of analysis, although it has to be said that this is often all we have. But he sometimes accepts the same terms of reference. He notes that the studies of the Cambridge Group have shown that 'the households of early modern villagers were overwhelmingly simple (that is, nuclear) in composition'; in one survey there were only eleven 'relatives' outside the conjugal family in 1000 households between 1150 and 1749, but in the nineteenth century there were many more—thirty-two by 1851. But the boundaries of a house are not the same as those of a 'family'. As I sit here in south-west France, an aged farmer walks up the hill to have his midday meal at the house of his already retired son and his wife—who has officially taken over the farm so that her husband can draw a pension. The dwelling groups are separate; the consumption groups are largely combined; kin relations are close. Whether they are living apart—as possibly in the English villages—or together is of limited significance; it is not enough to describe some as nuclear, others as complex families, when one is placing so much emphasis on the distinction in relation to events of global importance.

If Secombe is critical of the Cambridge group's ideas about the continuity of the 'nuclear family/household' in England, he accepts with open arms the thesis of the uniqueness of the (Western) European marriage pattern, even following Smith in seeing the genesis of this in England. He argues strongly that late marriage and life-cycle service in other households—of the late-married sons and daughters—contributed directly to the advent of capitalism and subsequently to the Industrial Revolution.³ He sees late marriage as increasing longevity, stimulating savings, raising the productivity of female labour and providing a number of other benefits; which affected which, however, is a matter for discussion. Some have argued that it is domestic service—like husbandry and apprenticeship—that delayed marriage rather than vice versa.⁴ In the same vein, others have suggested that proto-industrialization was already responsible for reducing the average age at marriage in the eighteenth century. This, too, is a moot point. Not only did the relationship vary in different areas, but the whole calculation of the average age of marriage is in doubt given that 'church marriage may well have covered only a minority of those living as couples' in this period.⁵ In parts 'unmarried motherhood' was common—perhaps for economic reasons—with some hand-loom weaving families, as in the delayed marriage of southern China, wishing to retain producers at home for as long as possible.

In any case the assumption that Europe invented mercantile capitalism is unsustainable; and, if we look at Europe, early developments of that kind took place in the Mediterranean rather than the north-west, the very area that often did not have late marriage. The Industrial Revolution is a dif-

³ Secombe, *Weathering the Storm*, pp. 230–41.

⁴ B. Hill, 'The Marriage Age of Women and the Demographers', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 28, 1989, p. 134; M. Anderson, 'Marriage Partners in Victorian Britain: An Analysis based on Registration District Data for England and Wales 1861', *Journal of Family History*, no. 1, 1976, pp. 55–78.

⁵ Hill, 'The Marriage Age of Women', p. 144.

ferent matter. Seccombe's most persuasive argument has to do with late marriage being set aside to increase the labour power available for industrial purposes. Despite its interest, this seems a curious proposal. One might also suggest that higher fertility—with earlier marriage—could have already put pressure on the land, encouraging a transformation of the economy (the Boserup thesis) which would absorb the surplus rural labour force. All in all, these factors seem of marginal importance when one considers the alternative possibilities. In any case, the late-marriage system is not unique. Tibet displays very similar features.⁶

Seccombe points clearly to the fact that, because it is largely dependent on census material, the Laslett discussion of the family turns on household composition, largely ignoring extra-household kinship.⁷ In fact he seems to use the concept in the same restricted way when talking of the relationship of the nuclear family to capitalism. It is because of the problems inherent in both 'household' and 'family' that I have previously advanced an analysis in terms of overlapping domestic groups and of wider kin relations.⁸

The Nuclear Household

Seccombe himself prefers the concept of the 'family cycle' to household analysis; the implications of this are revealed in the following claim: 'Despite its degree of co-resident extension, the family cycle of nineteenth-century proletarians was overwhelmingly nuclear, with households typically being established by the younger generation around the time of marriage and funded through income acquired independently of parental property and wealth'.⁹ Here he seems to be referring to a process rather similar to Hajnal's 'household formation'.¹⁰ Whereas in earlier times, extension had occurred through children staying in the parental homes, now parents came to join their children. The difference is important and related to the fact that the generations have different working environments, since for most there is no longer joint access to a productive enterprise. Equally important is the realization that the term 'nuclear' applies not to household composition, nor yet to the diminishing significance of kin networks—as in other work on the family—but to the process of establishing a household at marriage, 'a nuclear household'. It is not simply the question of separation at marriage; discussions of the developmental cycle of the domestic groups have pointed out that there is always some degree of fission when a marriage takes place, irrespective of the composition of the dwelling group.¹¹

⁶ P. Carrasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet*, Seattle 1959.

⁷ Although attempts have subsequently been made by members of the Cambridge group to rectify the situation. See R. M. Smith, 'Some Reflections on the Evidence for the Origin of the "European Marriage Pattern" in England', in C. Harris, ed., *The Secrecy of the Family*, Keele 1979.

⁸ J. Goody, *Domestic Groups*, Addison Wesley Modules in Anthropology, no. 28, Reading, Mass. 1972, J. Goody, ed., *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups: Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology*, no. 1, Cambridge 1958, and the introduction to this volume by M. Fortes.

⁹ Seccombe, *Weathering the Storm*, p. 65.

¹⁰ J. Hajnal, 'Two Kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation Systems', *Population and Development Review*, no. 8, 1982, pp. 449–94.

¹¹ See Fortes in Goody, *The Developmental Cycle*.

What is characteristic here is that a separate conjugal residence—neo-local in one sense of the term—is set up when a couple marry; but they clearly do not sever ties with their families of birth nor with wider kin, as the later composition of their households attest. Such arrangements seem poorly characterized as a 'nuclear family cycle' typical of capitalism.

Seccombe's modifications of Marxism include the attempted introduction of a feminist perspective. It must always be advantageous, and not simply politically correct, to see history from the standpoint of women as well as men, of children as well as adults, of the lower as well as the upper classes. Nevertheless, a valuable approach may also have its problems. After some complimentary words about my own analysis of kinship and family, he suggests that I have failed to understand the unequal position of women in medieval Europe. He maintains that my 'conceptual framework renders an unduly positive impression of women's position in medieval families', stressing dowry rights but making 'very little of their subsequent exclusion'. Seccombe sees my disagreement with Hughes's use of disinheritance to describe this exclusion as merely a quibble. Let me take the last point first. It is simply not the case that women were disinherited, if one sees inheritance—as I argue one should—as part of the process of devolving relatively exclusive rights (over property and so forth) from one generation to the next. It makes no more sense to speak of women being excluded from inheritance than it does to speak of men being excluded from the dowry; both are aspects of the process of devolution in which there may be some advantages for the junior generation in receiving one's portion earlier rather than later. If I hand over some property to my daughters as dowry before I die and leave my eldest son to take over the farm later on at my death, I may be privileging my son as far as land is concerned but I am not in any constructive sense disinheriting the daughters.¹² And in some 20 per cent of cases in Eurasia daughters will take over the lot—that is no exclusion. Even when they had brothers, many observers of the dowry have concluded that it 'offered in the past significant power to women'.¹³ The disappearance of dowry—and certainly its absence—could mean a disempowerment of women, if no new measures of empowerment were to emerge.

Women May Inherit Power and Property

Of course this notion of 'bilateral diverging devolution' does not at all imply equality of treatment of sons and daughters, nor yet of different sons. It implies that property—movable and/or immovable—is inherited through both males and females. I find Seccombe's alternative notion of 'a conjugal patriline' more problematic. Does it describe the

¹² Daughters did inherit land in southern Italy and Sri Lanka. For southern Italy, see J. Davis, *Land and Family in Pistecci*, London 1973, for Sri Lanka, see B. R. Leach, *Pal Ellyra, a Village in Ceylon: A Study in Land Tenure and Kinship*, Cambridge 1961. In parts of the Pyrenees, the eldest child, male or female, inherited. See G. Augustins, *Comment se perpétue-t-elle? Descent des lignées et destins des patrimoines dans les paysaneries européennes*, Nanterre 1989.

¹³ E. Friedl, 'The Position of Women: Appearance and Reality', in J. Dubisch, ed., *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*, Princeton 1986; M. Sarris, 'Death, Gender and Social Change in Greek Society' *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, no. 5, p. 24.

inheritance of property, succession to office or the reckoning of kinship? The phrase is as confusing as the use of 'patriarchy' to describe in an unqualified way male headship of households. Are female-headed households or women heirs simply deviants? Were Elizabeth I, Victoria and Elizabeth II mere anomalies in terms of a dominant ideology—implied by the term patriline—or were they part of a system in which, under certain circumstances, property and power descended to women when they obviously could have gone to more distant male relatives? Seccombe sees this 'patriline' system as tied in with the feudal-seigneurial society which structures family life in favour of reproduction within conjugal families. A broader look at domestic structures might have identified that mode of transmission with the kind of stratified societies found throughout Eurasia since the Bronze Age, in which it was necessary to maintain the class position of daughters as well as of sons. It is important that a feminist analysis does not lead to the neglect of the class perspective. A comparative approach that included, for example, Japan would have pre-empted this possibility.

The concept of diverging devolution bears only marginally on the global question of the equal treatment of men and women, which always has to be treated in a sectorial manner—what does it mean regarding child-birth, for example? No one is suggesting that women were treated equally to men, but some were more equal than others and some aspects were more equal than others. Diverging devolution describes systems of property transmission where male and female property—often in some form of a conjugal fund—devolves to both sexes, daughters as well as sons, not necessarily equally but substantially. In such societies, women's common interests are cut across by differential access to property—that is, by 'class' interests. As heiresses, women may even dominate the domestic domain, leading to the husband taking up residence in the wife's household—in uxorilocal, matrilineal or, for me, filiцентриc unions—with a concomitant redistribution of the power relationship; stronger women, weaker husbands.

The earlier tendency for a percentage of husbands to go and reside with inheriting wives (heiresses) is mentioned by Seccombe although he seems to resist the full implications. He is clear about the importance of women in determining residence after the Industrial Revolution, a situation that in my view has important continuities—as well as discontinuities—especially after what he refers to as the Second Industrial Revolution.

The Family Wage

For Seccombe, the Second Industrial Revolution arose out of the extensive use of steam-power, especially in the railways. It began around 1873 with 'a swarm of technological breakthroughs and rapid product developments in steel, chemicals, electricity and gas motors'.¹⁴ That was the period when Germany and the United States took over the earlier role of England. He sees the Second Industrial Revolution as giving rise to a new production regime with 'an intensive mode of consuming labour-

¹⁴ Seccombe, *Weathering the Storm*, p. 82

power, based on a reduced work-week, and a quicker, steadier pace of work under closer supervision'.¹⁵ Working-class couples responded to this situation by forging an intensive family economy where 'husbands were designated as breadwinners while their wives concentrated on being full-time homemakers'. That change to moral motherhood took place when higher productivity meant higher wages, which could be considered a 'family wage' so that a woman could direct all her attention to the home. But there was also a political element, which we do not hear much about. The changing situation owed something to women's efforts in pressing for changes in divorce, custody and other aspects of their domestic status—like Norton in England, Anthony in America—as well as to the work of other middle-class reformers caught up in what they saw as the injustices of the situation. Even in Victorian England the hegemony of 'patriarchy' was never complete; there were always internal contradictions related to the bilaterality of kinship and the duality of siblinghood and sexuality.

The earlier disorganization of working-class districts in towns described by Engels was followed by the transformation of housing, the re-establishment of more stable working-class communities and the increasing tendency to marriage within the neighbourhood, and dominance of female-centred institutions of domestic sharing among neighbours, so well described by Ross and related to the dominance of mother-centred families.¹⁶ In Tosh's words, 'private patriarchy' had almost disappeared from the urban working-class world described by Ross: 'the husband was often made to feel like a bull in a china-shop, excluded from the emotional currents of the family... The wife... was the one who maintained vital neighbourhood support, who negotiated with landlords and welfare workers, and who supervised the children's schooling.' Even money could come under her control and London magistrates sometimes spoke of the wife's 'headship of the home'.¹⁷ The man, meanwhile, found his companionship in the public house, a fact not unconnected with domestic assault.

Such a tendency is recognized by Seccombe when he notes that in nineteenth-century England bilateral kin networks veered in a matrilineal direction, with 66 per cent of widows living with daughters and 57 per cent of married children with the mother. Such complex households have been viewed by Ruggles as reflecting the realization of 'the stem family ideal' with the increased availability of relevant kin due to earlier marriage and a decrease in adult mortality. Seccombe insists on differentiating 'stem co-residence' (when a child brings a spouse to join the nuclear household) with the vertical extension of a *nuclear* household (when a parent comes to live with a married child). From a cyclical standpoint these are different in ways not initially recognized by the Cambridge Group.

Was this pattern due to preference, to the couple striving 'to fulfil an

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ E. Ross, 'Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London Before World War One', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 15, 1983, pp. 4–27

¹⁷ J. Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity?', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 38, 1994, p. 189

extended family ideal' or out of an obligation not to leave the parent 'homeless and destitute'? Seccombe rejects the first notion and accepts the second. In rejecting the first, he still clings to notions of fulfilling an ideal under other circumstances, an idea that seems a superfluous holistic and simplifying concept since surely individuals or relations may have different norms—or aims—at different points in the developmental cycle? The residential set-up is a compromise between the wishes and desires of different generations. As for the second idea, Seccombe accepts the obligation of the junior generation but limits that to cases of destitution. That cannot be right, either then or now. Whatever the 'nuclear family idea' (of newly-weds), many couples eventually end up living near or with their close kin. Such arrangements do not require homelessness but only a measure of 'filial piety' and parental affection and dependence.

Counterfactual Analysis Using Other Cultures

I cannot see how one can make any statement about the invention of childhood—which Seccombe recognizes for what it is worth—without looking at the situation in other cultures. This is equally true of other aspects of the family which is why a history of the Western European family alone is bound to be inadequate in the long run. Unlike many historians, Seccombe's sociological background makes him appreciate this point, even if he does not always follow through its implications. These are, as Marx and Weber recognized for the growth of capitalism, that we need to look elsewhere, if only for the counterfactual position—and they recognized this, even if their own comparisons were somewhat ethnocentric. That is the real criticism to be made of our distinguished predecessors.

The thesis of the changing nineteenth-century family under the impact of industrial capitalism was clearly stated by Frederick Engels: 'The history of the proletariat in England begins with the second half of the last century, with the invention of the steam-engine and of machinery for working cotton. These inventions gave rise, as is well known, to an industrial revolution, a revolution which altered the whole civil society...' ¹⁸ Seccombe's study excellently describes the growth of wage labour under industrialization and its effects upon domestic life, characterized as a process of proletarianization typical of the capitalist mode of production but beginning with earlier proto-industrialization in the eighteenth century. It is true that this was one aspect of the development of a modern economy in the West. But wage-labour and its consequences did not only affect the working class but large elements of the bourgeoisie who are today experiencing some of the same problems of the instability of paid work. It also affected many workers in socialist countries, where the isolation of the single-generation conjugal couple was even greater because of the confiscatory laws of inheritance. The inability to accumulate for one's children deprived the workforce of an important incentive to production. Surely the changes are closely linked to the process of industrialization and modernization in a broader sense that affects other groups and other 'non-capitalist' 'modes of production'.

¹⁸ F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, New York 1887, p. 3

Such change is well described but again Seccombe sometimes places too great a reliance on vague terms like 'patriarchal' which have been used rather loosely in much recent analysis. For instance, in discussing the role of kin-networks in protecting women seeking employment, Seccombe remarks that 'There was, in other words, a strong patriarchal aversion to their full proletarianization'.¹⁹ But kin-networks, as opposed to descent groups, are by definition bilateral and as we have seen there is plenty of evidence of the role mothers played in their daughters' welfare, including their place of residence. Studies of working-class relationships have stressed the continuing bond of mother and daughter in determining spatial proximity, allowing the mother's mother—in Eastern Europe as in the West—to play a part in looking after her grandchildren while the daughter is working or even shopping. That relationship is clearly psychologically strong because of the identification of the two, especially after childbearing when both will have gone through the same experience and the junior often depends upon the knowledge of the senior. Their closeness in every sense is of course much greater than with the father's parents, who for the mother remain in-laws rather than real kin, a perception that may be transferred to her daughter. That proximity has been emphasized in studies such as Young and Wilmot's on London's Bethnal Green and Madeleine Kerr's on Ship Street, Liverpool, while R. T. Smith has shown the prevalence of 'matrifocal families' not only in the Caribbean and among American blacks but among 'lower-status' families in other parts of the world.²⁰ Indeed, in some areas such closeness is reflected in kinship terminology where the term *nana* in southern England and *mémé* in France is reserved almost exclusively for the mother's mother rather than the paternal grandparent.²¹ Does this not, in Seccombe's terms, indicate a matriarchal rather than a patriarchal dimension? Certainly the role of women as household managers and as increasingly independent agents should not be underplayed in 'capitalist' societies, yet that is what is being done by the insistent use of the vague term 'patriarchy'.

Irresponsible Males?

In matrifocal as distinct from traditional matrilineal structures—involving a clan organization, inheritance and so forth—men are marginalized, whereas in the latter they are usually significant as 'mother's brothers'. That 'marginality' can often equal 'irresponsibility'. How far is this 'irresponsibility of fathers' a characteristic of modern industrial society? Wage-earning undoubtedly loosened the control of senior over junior generations. No longer did marriage involve the transmission of 'productive' property. What devolved was less immediately critical to one's existence, and the dowry became transmuted into parental assistance in other ways, such as education and house-purchase, that involved a looser control of marriage. Young men and women, as Seccombe stresses, were able to set up on their own and make independent choices of partner,

¹⁹ Seccombe, *Weathering the Storm*, pp. 32–3.

²⁰ M. Young and P. Wilmot, *Family and Kinship in East London*, London 1959; M. Kerr, *The People of Ship Street*, London 1958; R. T. Smith, *The Negro Family in British Guiana: Family Structure and Social Status in the Villages*, London 1956.

²¹ J. Goody, 'On Nannies and Nannies', *Man*, vol. 62, 1962, pp. 179–84; reprinted in Goody, *Comparative Studies in Kinship*, London 1969.

who was no longer necessarily a life-long companion. With increased mobility, men might make a woman pregnant and then leave for another job in another town—the quitting of jobs was more significant than getting the sack, except in crises: 'Paternal desertion appears to have been a major factor in the rise of "illegitimate" child birth after 1750. In six German villages in the first half of the eighteenth century, the couple eventually married in two-thirds of the first births conceived out of wedlock; a century later, just over half did.'²² Is this the trend that continued in the phenomenon of 'dead-beat dads', of the male marginality no longer confined to working-class and black communities?²³ The high incidence in contemporary society is the result of the increase in divorce and premarital birth. While there is certainly a great difference between failing to marry a pregnant lover and failing to support children after a longer relationship, the effects may be similar in terms of lone-parent families and their offspring. Freedom to choose a marriage partner implies freedom to end the union. The shift of jurisdiction over divorce in England in 1857 from ecclesiastical to lay courts was initially of benefit only to middle-class couples. Working classes had long practised desertion but the Christian church had hitherto forbidden divorce except in a very few circumstances. Inevitably the opportunities gradually widened to include the population at large, leading to the increase in re-marriage as well as cohabitation.

Extra-marital liaisons, including those producing children, are not the only aspect of the modern family and marriage that are prefigured in earlier working-class marriages. There was the reluctance to enter into formal marriage. Consensual unions had always been known but became much more common among the nineteenth-century working class where they avoided expense and at the same time any permanent commitment. Church marriages were almost impossible to undo except for the very rich and powerful. But consensual unions could be dissolved by informal procedures by 'wife sale' or by stepping backwards over the broomstick over which one had stepped forward at marriage.²⁴ There was also the disappearance of dowry—apart from the self-acquired dowry—which happened first among a proletariat who depended upon income rather than capital. By the beginning of this century, it had virtually vanished among the British middle classes, though it persisted in France until more recently.

The Rise and Fall of Fertility Rates

Secombe is only marginally concerned with these issues, though they are of central importance to the contemporary situation. Where he concentrates his valuable contribution, as the subtitle of his second volume indicates, is on the rise and then decline of fertility that followed the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, as we have seen, there seems to have been a rise even during proto-industrialization. Under full industrialization,

²² Secombe, *Weathering the Storm*, pp. 50–1.

²³ J. Mitchell and J. Goody, 'Who's Afraid of the Child Support Act? A Case History of the Changing Family', in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley, eds., *Women in the Time of the Backlash*, Harmondsworth 1996 (forthcoming).

²⁴ Secombe, *Weathering the Storm*, pp. 52–3.

Seccombe sees a relation between the demand of the economy for the labour of women and children and the encouragement of high fertility.²⁵ Here he is following Adam Smith and Engels. The former wrote: 'The demand for men, like that for any other commodity, necessarily regulates the production of men...' ²⁶ To this Engels added: 'If there are too few labourers at hand, prices, i.e. wages, rise, the workers are more prosperous, marriages multiply, more children are born and more live to grow up, until a sufficient number of labourers has been secured'. Higher fertility was counteracted by the involvement of women and children in industrial labour which increased their mortality. What was new was not the involvement of women and children in labour; in rural England, none had sat at home and few had gone to school. The difference lay in the shift from domestic, agricultural or even proto-industrial production to the inflexible factory arrangements of wage labour, together with the accompanying housing conditions so vividly described by Engels. These conditions meant that in the first half of the century the death rates in cities averaged 20 to 25 per cent above those in the country.

Women's labour disappeared from various industrial sectors such as mining, partly through pressure from men who saw their presence keeping wages down, partly by outside reformers. It continued in a few areas such as textiles which experienced an earlier fertility decline among married women. From the 1880s more and more clerical work was being done by women—up to a quarter of it in some cities—and male clerks protested at this 'slur on their manhood'.²⁷ But beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century, fertility declined across the whole of north-west Europe—though it had done so earlier in France. Between 1890 and 1920 it contracted by over 10 per cent in over half the countries of Europe. While this was the period when contraceptive methods became more sophisticated and were adopted by upper-class couples, the working class only did so in the 1920s. Nevertheless the decline in their birth-rates, even in consensual unions, had begun much earlier as a result of 'natural' methods.

While the reduction of fertility obviously has some 'elective affinity' with the growth of women's employment outside the home—as it does even more directly with the decline in child mortality, which is likely to lead to over-compensation—in fact, it begins before the great rise in the numbers of 'working women'. That followed, rather than preceded, the trend that has led to the present situation where more women are employed in Britain (many part-time) than men, an extraordinary reversal in which Engels would have seen a disturbing disempowerment of men—especially those of the middle class. While economic factors such as women's wage rates and the changing nature of 'work' are relevant, we must also consider that this development is linked to the education of women and to pressure from the women's movement, as well as to considerations of equity embodied in the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919. But, to revert to my earlier theme, whatever the demands

²⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

²⁶ A. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, vol. 1, section 8, p. 36, cited in Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, p. 113.

²⁷ Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity?', p. 194.

made upon the family by capitalism, there existed in the major Eurasian societies not merely 'patriarchal' tendencies but also a previous hierarchical system in which it was important to maintain the status of daughters as well as men, not making them equal to men but distinguishing them from daughters in lower groups, and enabling them to make marriages in the same or higher ones. To insist on this factor is not to dwell upon the unchanging family—an approach which Seccombe rightly rejects—but to recognize that such structural elements may continue to play a role over time. What I have called 'diverging devolution' adapts to new situations, perhaps providing a countervailing tendency within them that has its own logic of development as well as a measure of structural autonomy, urged on by human agents who stand to gain from the changing nature of domestic life.

The general problem in the history of the family is one of articulation. Yes, the economic and family systems are interrelated. But in what ways? Much of the discussion has assumed a pre-existing affinity between the development of capitalism and the nature of the family in north-western Europe. In general, it suffers from a failure to enquire in a sufficiently comparative manner. And where comparison is made, with the East for example, it is done from too ethnocentric a point of view, as was the case with Marx and Weber. Demographic historians who concentrate on the continuities necessarily tend to play down the other changes that have taken place at the domestic level. Seccombe rightly offers a critique of this approach. Other historians, who look at what they see as the consequences of capitalism, again take a limited European perspective, misattributing to their own continent aspects of family life like the invention of childhood or love or individuality which are found much more widely.²⁸ These Seccombe rightly ignores. He sees a relationship between production and reproduction and, by bringing in a wider range of considerations, insists upon change. What he does not sufficiently do, in my view, is to allow for the degree of structural autonomy that exists between production and reproduction. More forms of kinship can exist with capitalism than modernization theory allowed; the same is also true for earlier periods. Male domination in the political or economic sphere may not simply be reflected in the family. Among the Asante of West Africa, the political system is staffed by males. The role of the Queen Mother alone reflects politically the fact that this is a matrilineal society in which women—and their brothers as distinct from their husbands—play an important part in determining the residence of men. Male authority at the political level is consistent with quite a different distribution of power in the domestic domain.

²⁸ I have discussed these features in more detail in *The East in the West*

Reply to Dorothy Thompson and Fred Inglis

What initially inspired me to study the British New Left was not just an awareness of the intellectual importance and political urgency of its legacy, but a curious attraction to its charismatic personalities. As a matter of fact, and understandably since he was personally involved, Gareth Stedman Jones did not tell me more than what was absolutely necessary—preliminary reading and where to find the people whom I wished to interview. He rarely made comments about them, certainly never any gossip. As a result, and also because of my own tendency to feel nervous about bothering others, I frequently worked from common-sense knowledge of a culture which was nonetheless unfamiliar to me, and sometimes got hung up on trivial details. Before I met him, I remember being puzzled by the names Ralph Samuel and Raphael Samuel, for example, and only turned to my supervisor to confirm that they were the same person after hours searching in the library. I have always considered the History Workshop movement to be an extraordinarily valuable undertaking, as was its journal as a socialist and feminist publication—despite the recent dropping of its subtitle. Another case was my tracing of the influence of the English tradition of literary criticism on Raymond Williams, from Leavis and *Scrutiny* to the otherwise remote Bloomsbury group of which I knew nothing except the names of its famous members. The visible outcome in the book of all my effort at an extensive reading of Bloomsbury was no more than a footnote, but I was pleased to have done it without troubling Gareth with elementary questions. He taught me, rather, a great deal in a more general and fundamental way, about historical study. I was fascinated by his graduate course on Utopian socialism, for instance, not to mention his highly acclaimed *Outcast London* or *The Language of Class*; over the latter there has been a continuously exciting controversy. Dorothy Thompson is also an expert on Chartism, although with a dissimilar style and approach. Seeing her—generous praise aside—firmly excluding my book from the realm of history, I felt sad but not resentful.¹ After all, it is not easy to be a good historian, especially when you try to write a story under the very noses of its most rigorous protagonists! They, moreover, would have little consensus on almost any subject in a straightforward narration of their own experiences—as John Saville warned me years ago.

Of course, I have always had the highest respect for that remarkable generation of communist historians. As I noted in my book, Marxism in

¹ Dorothy Thompson, 'On the Trail of the New Left', NLR 215, pp. 93–100.

Britain had its greatest success in the history profession; and it was those around the Communist Party historians' group who first came out against Stalinism.² I have exchanged letters with some of them including Edward Thompson whose name, by the way, along with a few of his contemporaries including Eric Hobsbawm and Ralph Miliband, is well known in China. Much to my regret, I was never able to make the pilgrimage to Worcestershire. I missed many others, too, and still feel truly sorry for I am sure that what they would have had to tell me would have been particularly valuable. Yet I did have the fortune to meet quite a number of the leading participants—going to Hull, for instance, to see John Saville, a founding father of the British New Left, where I greatly appreciated his guidance on a wide range of questions. I was also impressed by the innovative approach of his Northern Historians' Group which I intended, but turned out to be unable, to pursue.

In all honesty, I do not follow Dorothy Thompson's implicit discomfort with the identification of at least a core part and a crucial period of the British New Left as Marxist. Why, I wonder, given the shared intellectual and political background of Edward Thompson—despite his increasing mistrust of 'systematized' Marxism³—and the other 'brave people' (Dorothy, quoting Picasso) during and after the war years which were movingly recalled in her review? Yes, there were varied beliefs and preoccupations especially over the non-aligned movements of CND and END. But in talking about the main figures and publications of the New Left, as I did, I remain convinced that it was the Marxist tradition, developed in various directions, that was the movement's strongest feature. I am referring here not only to the younger generations' celebrated theorizing around and beyond 'Western Marxism' but also to the more 'English'-centred works, as diverse as Thompson's interpretation of class consciousness, Miliband's conceptualization of the state, Williams's cultural materialism, and Stuart Hall's Gramscian discourse theory. Lively and regular debates and discussions of Marxism appeared not only in the second *New Left Review*, but also in its predecessors, the *Reasoner* and the *New Reasoner*—though this is not to dismiss the importance of the creative writers on their editorial committees⁴—if not so much in the *Universities and Left Review*, and surely *Socialist Register*. This is precisely because for the New Left thinkers Marxism was not, as Dorothy Thompson put it, an 'ideological position'; much effort was made to recast it in the light of other theories of social science and of contemporary conditions.

More important, in no way was this New Left engagement with Marxism a merely intellectual and apolitical tradition.⁵ So it is a bewildering charge that by discussing Marxism I was not treating the New Left as a political movement. I never had the slightest doubt about the political nature of my subject, and I still cannot see how it might be otherwise. The entire New Left project, as I understood it, which is per-

² Lin Chun, *The British New Left*, Edinburgh 1993, p. 159

³ See *ibid.*, p. 176, n.36

⁴ See, for instance, my comments about Doris Lessing's *Golden Notebook* in *ibid.*, pp. 4, 168.

⁵ See Robin Blackburn's remark cited in *ibid.*, p. 136

haps also the only point on which we might have everybody's agreement, was to find an alternative 'third way' in the context of the political impasse of the old left mainstreams. I devoted many pages of my book to real political activity, including each topic mentioned by Dorothy, along with others, such as the New Left economic policy proposals for Labour and missions for peace or Third World liberation carried out by different New Left groups.⁶ Their diverse connections with the labour movement was certainly a focus for me—to tell the truth, anyone like me who had an education in which the 'working class' enjoyed very nearly a sacred status, could hardly miss anything of these links, or issues concerning the class identities of the New Left. From Lawrence Daly, his Fife Socialist League and idea of workers' community self-management to the Movement for Workers' Control led by Michael Barratt Brown, John Hughes and Ken Coates among others; from Richard Hoggart's lament over the class culture of local workers to Williams's pride in his railway signalman father, what I found was a deep-rooted 'labour metaphysics' in much New Left thinking which sustained a (fading) faith in the organized working class as a central counter-force to capitalist domination.⁷ My very rewarding trip to Nottingham and Sheffield to interview Coates and Barratt Brown was motivated as much by their respective family and personal backgrounds—miners and WEA teachers—as their prominent roles in IWC. In fact my enthusiasm for Perry Anderson's theoretical work was greatly reinforced by his earlier analysis of incomes policy, the welfare state and workers' control.

Besides, as is now widely accepted, the cultural is hardly not political or, more precisely, can be politically constructed and articulated. My lens for seeing either ULR or the first wave of cultural studies initiated from the Birmingham Centre as an 'interventionist engagement', for example, was anything but apolitical.⁸ This might be seen especially in my treatment of Hall's line of argument. A quick glance at my book should be sufficient to establish that it is really not 'in essence a history of NLR' but of the ideas and movement of the political New Left. Just one more note here on the international dimension. Dorothy mentioned the existence of a European Left to which many British Leftists saw themselves as belonging. I discussed this in some detail, and also in relation to the ambiguity toward an integrated Europe felt and debated among many on the New Left. I was nonetheless also critical of the weak awareness within the first generation of the New Left—with only a few outstanding exceptions—of the significance of capitalist globalization: today's watchword was yesterday's reality, too, though that reality was somehow distorted and disguised by the retreat of the colonial empires.⁹ One can indeed easily observe a peculiar internationalism that was simultaneously parochial—my heroes were mostly European in their personal attitudes and perspectives in one way or another; their outlooks, ironically, tended to be profoundly metropolitan and even Eurocentric, Eastern Europe included. While I do not necessarily share much of the critique of

⁶ See *ibid.*, section III.3 and pp. 146–7, 126, 181.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19, 26, n. 76, 176–7, n. 41, pp. 84–5, 123–4, xv.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁹ For instance, *ibid.*, pp. 78, 139, I am incidentally still using Peter Worsley's and Victor Kiernan's work.

'orientalism' fashioned in more recent academic discourse, I did then have difficulty with, for instance, the exclusion of keywords such as 'imperialism' and 'nationalism' from Williams's original list.¹⁰ The controversial attitude of 'Third Worldism' affected mainly the 1968 generation.

This leads me to the next point that Fred Inglis fairly identified as my 'disappointment' over the demise of the New Left. The English concept 'demise', however, is not in the vocabulary of my own native language. I used it, as the dictionary allows, in the sense not of death but of transfer. So in my epilogue, entitled 'From the New Left to the new social movements', I summarized the political and intellectual continuities of the two. Even 'transfer', I admit, certainly signifies subsidence. I described this as a full stop to a distinct 'New Left' history when the movement 'began to drift further from the political scene' which was to be dominated by the New Right from the late 1970s.¹¹ I would agree with Inglis and Thompson that 'failure'—maybe I misused the word—is probably the wrong characterization. Perhaps the phrase 'political defeat', which I also used, was more accurate. The present-day significance of the New Left legacies was exactly the focus of my argument; otherwise, what was the point of writing such a book? Moreover, I felt that my subject was also highly relevant to the experiments of socialist reform movements in places as geopolitically distant as China—with which I have been intimately concerned. A Chinese New Left is actually developing, among its other serious programmes, the idea of an economic democracy sustaining a kind of 'stakeholder society' which is more than merely a shallow joke.

It may sound strange that my hidden comparative scale, which Inglis cannot see, was China. That is why he misunderstood my central question to be about the ability of intellectual undertakings to achieve social changes. No, as someone from a country where elite Communist Party intellectuals occupied virtually all the posts in the Politbureau and the Red Army Headquarters over a prolonged revolutionary period—not to mention Plekhanov, Lenin or Trotsky in Russia—I have always believed in the dialectical potential of the 'weapons of criticism'. The communists rebelled within and without the academy and eventually changed the world by formulating 'minimum' and 'maximum' programmes and by educating and organizing the masses—we will have to leave aside such concerns as the nature of their success, the definition of 'intellectuals' or 'organic intellectuals' and state assimilation. But we all know too well that Britain was a million times different and did not need 'criticism of weapons'. Here is the core of my question: how could a society, as democratic, affluent and civilized as Britain was be (further) changed in a socialist direction? Indeed what was fundamentally wrong with the British socio-economic system, polity and public consciousness which required radical changes? Where to forge the social forces and struggles for these changes? I thought my 'figures of dissent' (to borrow Inglis's phrase)—many of them feminist and anti-racist authors as well as campaigners on peace and the environment—provided some far-reaching answers. We must therefore 'listen to the creative thinkers that the New

¹⁰ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, London 1976

¹¹ Lin Chun, *The British New Left*, p. 153

Left movement was able to produce, who became main voices of late twentieth-century British socialism'.¹²

I am very grateful to Dorothy Thompson and Fred Inglis for their reviews. I also greatly appreciate other reviews of my book and the personal accounts such as Marion Kozak's memoir from which I have learnt so much.¹³ What I did was no more than lay a stone in the foundation of a historical monument to the British New Left, a monument that may disperse the clouds of the end of history. After mine, better books are bound to come.

¹² See *ibid.*, pp. xvii-xviii.

¹³ Marion Kozak, 'How It All Began: A Footnote to History', *Socialist Register*, 1995

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Interpreting the New Left: Pitfalls and Opportunities

Interpretation of the New Left raises a number of tricky historical and hermeneutical issues for the contemporary commentator. This current has always challenged conventional demarcations between intellectual matters and political life, and has experimented with different kinds of theoretical argument and political project. Accordingly, the New Left does not fit easily into the categories and disciplinary boundaries of the modern academy. Understanding both its history and 'meaning' are thus relatively complex exercises in which different levels of intellectual argument and political action need to be addressed.

Such difficulties are particularly marked when we consider the early years of the New Left in Britain, from 1956 to the early 1960s, when an unusual kind of political 'movement' came into being. Whilst the history of the New Left in these years is often referred to in passing, it has not, on the whole, been properly analyzed. Most interpreters have chosen to present the story of these years in terms of the choices and mistakes of key 'actors', though others—including myself—have tried to incorporate wider structural factors which shaped the nature and prospects of this 'movement'.¹ Evaluating the worth and significance of the ideas developed in the different New Left milieux is also far from straightforward, given the eclecticism and subsequent impact of many of the concerns which were aired at this time. And, finally, there is the difficulty of excavating the recent history of a number of prominent intellectuals and activists in a period about which many are still sensitive. Some former participants remain understandably 'territorial' about this part of their political and intellectual lives.

These real interpretative problems, in some ways peculiar to the New Left phenomenon, have elicited very different methodological responses in the spate of recent commentary on the British movement, though they have rarely been explicitly addressed.² Any sense of them is absent from, for instance, Dorothy Thompson's discussion of the books about the British New Left by Lin Chun and myself.³ The tenor of Thompson's

¹ Michael Kenny, *The First New Left. British Intellectuals After Stalin*, London 1995.

² See, for instance, Lin Chun, *The British New Left*, Edinburgh 1995, Ioan Davies, *Cultural Studies and Beyond. Fragments of Empire*, London 1995, Fred Inglis, 'The Figures of Dissent', *NLR* 215, pp. 83–92, and Jim McGuigan, 'Reviewing a Life. Fred Inglis's Biography of Raymond Williams', *NLR* 215, pp. 101–8.

³ Dorothy Thompson, 'On the Trail of the New Left', *NLR*, 215, pp. 93–100.

contribution is clear from the outset, encapsulated in the disdainful observation with which she begins her piece: 'The politics of the non-aligned Left of the years 1956–1962 have become fashionable of late.' Most of her remarks about my own book suggest a rather hurried reading and rely heavily upon caricature; but in essence our differences come down to methodology and problems of interpretation. Rather than opting for the point-by-point refutation with which miffed authors traditionally reply to their critics, I want to correct her principal misinterpretation of the book's rationale, and offer some brief comments on the interpretative problems outlined above, in the context of my assessment of the intellectual contribution of the early New Left. My book is not, and does not claim to be, a complete historical account of the different milieux within this 'movement'. It is a study of the ideas produced by some of the early New Left's leading thinkers in different spheres, and contains a brief narrative account of the New Left as a 'movement' between 1956 and 1964.⁴ Like her, I await a published account of the history of the New Left as a 'movement', but find it strange that she should mistake my book for an attempt to provide one.

Problems of Documentation

Of greater importance are the methodological problems facing those trying to interpret the history of the New Left in Britain. The major difficulty stems from the lack of written documents and archival materials, especially in these early years. Whilst a host of autobiographical reminiscences have been published over the years, and many brief references to the movement appear in general histories of the British Left and particular academic disciplines such as Cultural Studies, no fully documented history has been written. There is also no single archive where relevant material is collected, whilst the rather chaotic and fragile organizational efforts of the clubs and the different journals mean that record-keeping was haphazard. Surviving documents remain scattered throughout the personal papers of a few former participants. The New Left is consequently one of the most poorly documented currents on the British Left—compare this poverty with the riches assembled in the Communist Party archive at the National Museum of Labour History in Manchester. So Thompson's reduction of the importance of this question to a discussion of her late husband's collection of pamphlets and correspondence—which is implicitly presented as a gold-mine that would make any self-respecting historian produce a 'proper' account—is inadequate. I am sure that there is much of value in the collection to which she refers, but she seems unaware of the different archival sources already available, especially John Saville's large collection of personal correspondence, pamphlets and editorial minutes and correspondence from this period.

⁴ Thompson criticizes the book principally on the grounds that I claim to be writing a history of the first New Left as 'both a political movement and an organization' (p. 95) but omit too many relevant details. This is a bizarre misrepresentation of my intentions. If we look at the full passage from which she selectively borrows, it becomes clear that my purposes were in fact rather different. 'My assessment of the first New Left's political ideas is prefaced by a description and assessment of its history as both a political movement and organization in chapter one' (*The First New Left*, p. 7). In chapters two to seven, which constitute the overwhelming bulk of the text, these 'political' ideas are evaluated.

Her treatment of the question of how to interpret the play of personalities involved in the events of these years is equally weak. Thompson is adamant that I have misread the leading characters.⁵ Yet she says little about the issues at stake here, not least the difficulty of balancing actor-centred interpretation with consideration of hidden structural factors which may have shaped the events in which these figures took part—for instance the difficulties facing extra-parliamentary movements or the centralized character of political life in Britain. In her treatment of this theme, there is no recognition of the tangled web of personalities, politics and ideas that lie at the heart of the unravelling of the early New Left as a 'movement' and the problems this poses for the contemporary commentator.

Central to her argument is the assumption that the methods of the scholarly historian represent the best way of getting at the 'true' story of the New Left and all that it signified. This raises a third methodological problem. Whilst good empirical history is highly important, it is not clear that it alone will solve the many problems of interpretation particular to the New Left. Can the 'meaning' and significance of a current which has always been unconventional in political and intellectual terms be grasped within a strictly orthodox historical analysis? Personally, I doubt it. The different levels at which the New Left was operating—close personal relations and conflicts as well as high-level theoretical arguments and developments—require an equally varied analytical response.

In *The First New Left* I tried to capture certain aspects of the politics and ideas of the early years of this current which have been rather neglected. My concern was to challenge some of the long-established wisdom about the early years of the New Left in Britain. Much of this stems from a historiography which is either overly hagiographic and nostalgic, or unreasonably critical in its judgements, paying scant attention to the limitations and constraints facing the central players in the drama of these years.⁶ In my efforts to avoid these traps, it became clear to me that a more balanced critical appraisal of its thinkers' social and political ideas would be more productive, and that some of the ideas developed in the New Left milieu of this period might be fruitfully read alongside intellectual developments elsewhere. There is a surprising prescience about early New Left debates on issues such as the nature of ideology and social identity, the role of cultural politics, and concern for the value of 'community', as well as deep internal disagreements on these and related questions. Whilst these arguments and tensions belonged to a singular context, they can also be regarded as anticipating important subsequent moments of political and intellectual division on the Left.⁷ The early years of the British movement, therefore, constitute a more interesting part of the story of the evolution of New Left thinking in particular and socialist ideas in general than has usually been suggested.

⁵ Thompson, 'On the Trail of the New Left', p. 95

⁶ Fred Inglis's writing on Raymond Williams oscillates between both attitudes, see *Raymond Williams*, London 1995, and McGuigan, 'Reviewing a Life'

⁷ This point is well illustrated in the proceedings of the 1987 'Out of Apathy' conference, which brought together some of the leading participants in the early New Left, published as R. Archer et al., eds, *Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On*, Verso, London 1989

Some of the most interesting questions about the intellectual Left in these years have been buried beneath the prejudices and assumptions of various former participants. The criticisms of the empiricism, romanticism and moralism of New Left thinkers before Perry Anderson and others introduced continental thinkers into the pages of *New Left Review* after 1962, have been routinely invoked. But these have obscured the possibility that certain intellectual developments within the British milieu before this date paralleled theoretical leaps elsewhere. A close examination of the different kinds of social, cultural and political criticism produced at the time reveals the influence of Raymond Williams's ideas about the interconnections between different social domains, which encouraged a more expansive and 'hegemonic' conception of power relations in the work of some intellectual figures in this circle. Equally, some of the ethical debates which took place in the pages of the *New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review* were of a quality and significance which have not always been recognized.⁸

Indeed, little attention has been paid to the idea that the New Left, for all its particularities, might be understood as part of the larger story of the troubled relationship between radical intellectuals and political life in Britain.⁹ In comparison with the different types of theoretical and empirical studies of New Left currents and parties which have been conducted elsewhere, the literature on the domestic New Left is more parochial. This may well be the product of the bias in favour of History and Eng. Lit.—and now Cultural Studies—and away from Politics and Sociology, which characterizes much of the writing on this phenomenon in Britain.¹⁰ Whatever the reasons, no systematic comparison has been attempted between the British New Left and New Left currents elsewhere. To some degree, this is the result of unthinking assumptions about local 'peculiarities' and the rather insular treatment of the past which have often characterized reflections on the British New Left. Even within this context, it is strange how few attempts have been made to compare the New Left with similar, but different, phenomena—such as Guild Socialism, the Left Book Club, or the new social movements—and to consider whether such parallels might improve our understanding of the political culture and system in Britain, or of the social backgrounds of participants in such ventures. Adopting different angles of approach and posing new questions about this phenomenon are important ways of thinking about New Left history, as are detailed examinations of the biographical backgrounds of key personnel. Despite some obvious differences of focus and interpretation, the recent books by Lin Chun and

⁸ There are some honourable exceptions here, such as Kate Soper, 'Socialist Humanism', in H. Kaye and K. McClelland, eds, *E. P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives*, Cambridge 1990.

⁹ This is so despite Perry Anderson's stimulating discussion of this and related themes as far back as 1965 in 'The Left in the Fifties', *NLR* 29, January–February 1965, pp. 3–18.

¹⁰ In these latter disciplines, such comparisons are well established. See, for instance, H. Wainwright, *Arguments for a New Left: Answering the Free Market Right*, Oxford 1994; C. Rooses, 'Student Radicalism: The Politics of Moral Protest and Legitimation Problems in the Modern Capitalist State', *Theory and Society*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1980); and R.J. Dalton and M. Kuechler, eds, *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, Cambridge 1980.

Excess Deaths in the Soviet Union

I am sure that R.W. Davies, usually a rigorously accurate presenter even of facts which tell against his views, would wish you to correct some of the errors he presents in his article 'Forced Labour Under Stalin'.¹ I have a reasonable claim to this, for he gives my own estimates for excess deaths in the USSR in the 1930s as a minimum of seventeen million but he is counting categories twice, and, if he looks more carefully, he will see that I suggest about eleven million by the beginning of 1937, and about three million over the period 1937-38, making fourteen million. The eleven-odd million is readily deduced from the undisputed population deficit shown in the suppressed census of January 1937, of fifteen to sixteen million, by making reasonable assumptions about how this was divided between birth deficit and deaths. There is room for disagreement on the second figure. But Davies has fallen into the common trap by accepting figures given to the Khrushchevite leadership by a KGB which was still falsifying—for example—death rates and causes in rehabilitation cases. They are given, too, with accompanying arrest figures only a quarter as high as the Zemskov GULAG intake Davies accepts. The appeal seems simply to be their exactness. But Soviet exactness has no bearing on validity. And Davies gives no attention to much higher, though more approximate, estimates provided by the late head of the Russian Archives, the former head of the Party Rehabilitation Commission, and a spokesman for the Security Ministry itself. Nor, in the case of the number of execution in 1937-38, does Davies note the rough figure of 1,750,000 given both by the Head of Archives, and by a representative of the Security Ministry, as against the earlier figure of 681,692 which he accepts. And so on.

He quotes me as praising Zemskov as a reliable researcher. Yes, the documents he gives us are genuine, but not therefore complete or accurate; and if his grand totals of entrance into GULAG are accepted, this does not apply to subtotals of 'release' and so forth. As to our too high earlier estimates of camp numbers derived from indirect reports—which Davies slightly mis-states—our colleague, the late Alec Nove, suggested that this was probably due to the inclusion of sentences to mere 'exile', the penalty inflicted on Lenin and others in Tsarist times, which, as Davies says, may be very large. In this context, the 'high' and 'low' figures may thus be reconciled.

Davies rightly praises Lorimer's classic work. But he used the 1939 census totals now officially shown to be overstated by a matter of three million, and probably inflated even in their raw state so it is hard to understand Davies accepting them. Lorimer would not have!

As Davies says, this is not a political issue here—though it is in Russia, where the communists are making much of Stalin having killed 'less than a million people'.

R. W. Davies Replies:

1. Regarding Conquest's pre-perestroika estimates of excess deaths in the 1930s, in *The Great Terror* Conquest estimated that 3,500,000 people died during

¹ 'Forced Labour Under Stalin: The Archive Revelations', *NLR* 214, pp. 62-80.

collectivization, 3,500,000 in the camps up to 1936, two million in the camps in 1937–38, and that in addition there were one million executions.¹ These add up to ten million, and obviously exclude the famine. In *Harvest of Terror* he claimed that at a minimum fourteen million *peasants alone* died prematurely in the 1930s, including seven million in the famine, and that 70–80 per cent of those in the camps were peasants.² These figures certainly imply at least seventeen million excess deaths in total

2. Eleven million excess deaths in 1926–36 cannot be 'readily deduced' from the 1926 and 1937 population census data because we do not know the true birth rate, especially during the famine.

3. On executions a variety of figures have been produced by Russian government officials, without any explanation of their provenance. I cited the *biggest* figure—seven million. Conquest used to look kindly on this figure³ but now appears, correctly, to reject it. The top-secret figures for executions supplied by the KGB to the Politburo in various documents from 1953 onwards (including the figure of 681,692 in 1937–38) certainly omit some executions—for instance, of Polish officers in 1940. We shall have to await greater openness of the KGB archives before we can decide between my suspicion of the figure of 1,750,000 and Conquest's support for it

Naturally the *total* number of arrests in Zemskov's figures is higher than the number of arrests given in the KGB documents, which do not include the large number of arrests of criminals by the civil authorities dealt with by the ordinary courts

4. Conquest's figure of nine million in camps and prisons in late 1938, *excluding criminals*, which he described at the time as 'highly conservative', was obviously a gross over-estimate, and it would prevent the perpetuation of error if he admitted this.

5. I clearly stated in my article that Lomimer's estimate for excess deaths was too low, and that I had been mistaken in accepting it. I am at a loss to understand why Conquest claims that I still support it

6. While Conquest found several 'errors' in my article which are not there, he did not spot an actual error, for which I apologize. The column for 1939 in the table on p. 67 should read:

	(thousands of persons)
Prisons	351
Camps	1,317
Colonies	355
Special settlements	939
<hr/>	
Total	2,962

¹ *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, London 1960, pp. 532–3

² *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror Famine*, London 1986, pp. 304–7.

³ *The Great Terror*, London 1990, p. 487